

# *Disappeared*

*My Testimony*

*by Jean Sklar*





*Disappeared*

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*Disparu*

*Mon Témoignage*

*Jean Sklar*

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Szklarz family  
Metz, France 1938  
Second row: Cecile Lea, Jacques  
Front row (left to right): Nathan, Traitel, Paulette and Annette, Jean





Pierre and Celine Rychner

*I have only one passion, that of the light, in the name of humanity which has suffered so much and is entitled to happiness.*

--Émile Zola, "J'Accuse...!" 1898

*Bow before the unknown Jewish martyr in respect and piety for all of the martyrs, go in thought with them on their dolorous path, it will guide you to the highest summit of justice and truth.*

--Translated from the inscription in French on the exterior of the Mémorial de la Shoah in Paris, France.



## *PROLOGUE*

The Moselle River in Europe meanders down from its source located on the western slopes of the Ballon d'Alsace in the Vosges mountains. It flows through France, Luxembourg and Germany until it joins the Rhine River at Koblenz, Germany. Approximately one-hundred and sixteen miles from its source the Moselle reaches the City of Metz, France. The river cuts through the city and it bifurcates, leaving several islands, called Les Îles, in between the two distributaries. I was born at 6:00 p.m. on July 10, 1929 in L'hôpital Notre-Dame-de-Bon-Secours located in the Nouvelle Ville section of Metz, not far from the Moselle. I spent the first ten years of my life in Metz growing up alongside that river. My family's apartment, my school, my synagogue and my playgrounds were all located near the river. My mother washed our clothes in the river, at a place called Lavoir des Thermes. One of my cherished family photographs was taken in a park along the banks of the Moselle called Metz-Plage.

I understand that at one time Metz was occupied by the Romans. There are Roman artifacts in the city, including Roman roads beneath a main road, and remnants of Roman baths and fountains. Metz evolved into a large fortress city that garrisoned the armies of France's sprawling Colonial Empire, even when I lived there. I saw some of the fortifications. There were soldiers from various regiments from France's colonies - Algerians, Tunisians, Moroccans, and Senegalese. The soldiers marched through the town in their colorful uniforms, which varied by regiment, and they played military music and sang songs. In the fields around the city, the soldiers engaged in maneuvers and fired off their guns. Bi-planes that were based at the air force field located nearby at Frescaty buzzed the sky. I played in the remnants of the trenches where a generation of young men were slaughtered during World War I. Parts of the Maginot Line, a string of fortifications built by France after World

War I to contain any future German aggression, were near Metz. During the winter of 1938/1939 it was so unusually cold that the Moselle froze solid enough to allow military vehicles, tanks and trucks, to drive over it.

The Moselle, and Metz, have been the geographic focal point of many historical events, and many wars. While nations fight for strategic and political advantage over rivers like the Moselle, over lands like Alsace-Lorraine, and over cities like Metz, the people who live there are forced to suffer the consequences. I am a witness to one of those chapters of history. This is my testimony.

I will begin by introducing you to my family. I am their voices. I am their memories.



# *CHAPTER I*

## *METZ*

### *A. GRANDPARENTS PIERRE AND CELINE RYCHNER*

Metz is located one-hundred seventy-five miles east of Paris in the region known as Alsace-Lorraine. Metz is not far from France's borders with the nations of Luxembourg, Belgium and Germany. Alsace-Lorraine has been variously claimed by both France and Germany. After the Franco-German War of 1870-1871, Germany annexed Alsace-Lorraine and Metz became a part of Germany. When I lived in Metz, maybe one-half of the population spoke German, the other half spoke French. Even some of the streets were marked in German, some in French. I suppose that after France was victorious in World War I, and the region reverted back to France, they didn't have time to change all of the street signs by the time I was old enough to read them. The principal industries in Metz were the military, steel mills and coal mines. Lured by the prospect of gainful employment in a nation whose workforce had been decimated by World War I, and seeking to escape persecution and anti-Semitism in Poland, my parents and my maternal grandparents immigrated to Metz in 1922, four years after the end of World War I.

My mother's father was Paltiel (also, Petal) Rychner (also, Richner), born in 1860, and her mother was Zisla (née Szyndlerow; also, Schindler), born in Zarki [also, Jarky], Poland, in 1855. My grandparents came to France after World War I from the city of Sosnowiec in Poland. Paltiel became Pierre. Zisla became Celine. My grandmother had about 18 children, and most of them didn't

survive long after birth. Three or four pairs of the children were twins, and I know that at least one pair of twins survived. All of the children who survived childhood also left Poland and they settled in Germany, France and England. My mother, Cecile, was the youngest of the Rychner children, and she moved with my grandparents, her brother Aron Rychner and her sister Gitla Kapelmeister to Metz. The oldest child, Rachel, moved to London, England. I knew Aunts Gitla and Rachel, and Uncle Aron, but I never met any of my other aunts and uncles. My mother and grandmother spoke of them and I knew that they kept in touch by corresponding.

My grandfather was a tailor and he worked hard. Most of his work was custom tailored suits for men. There were many factories around Metz and because there was a great demand for workmen's clothes, he would also make workmen's blue jackets and pants. He filled orders for local merchants who sold the clothes to the workers. Because grandfather could not handle the volume of the work by himself, he employed neighbors and some of my older cousins to do various piece work, like sewing buttons on the garments, making button holes, and finish stitching.

Grandfather Pierre was a very pious, serious and good man. People looked up to him. He had a long beard. He went to Shul every morning and evening and he observed Shabbos and all of the Jewish holidays. People, mostly elderly Jewish men from Metz, gathered regularly with him to study the Talmud. They held their study sessions either at Grandfather's apartment, at the apartment where I lived, or at the other men's homes. For many, many years he would not allow his picture to be taken, he said it was not allowed. Fortunately, I have copies of two of the rare photographs that he allowed to be taken of him.

Metz was a transportation hub for the railroad. The Gare de Metz was and still is the imposing centerpiece of the Germanic Imperial District of Metz. The Gare was built by the Germans before World War I and it linked Metz to Berlin with a direct rail line. Trains from countries located in Eastern Europe would stop in Metz. Passengers included people who were emigrating from Europe and were taking passage on ships departing from the ports of Le Havre or Dunkirk. They would come to Metz, either switch trains or continue on from Metz by road. If the train came in on a Friday in the afternoon, Grandfather Pierre would go to the railroad station on Friday

afternoon, and if any religious Jews were disembarking from the train because they didn't want to travel on Shabbos, he would invite them to spend Shabbos at his home. He would give them dinner and they slept over. His apartment was also located on en Vincetruë, just a few houses away from where my family lived. The apartment was not large, and sometimes his guests would sleep on the benches or on the tables in the apartment. They would go to Shul on Saturday, and on Sunday morning, he would take them back to the railroad station and they continued on their journeys to their new homelands.

Grandfather Pierre was also very quiet and didn't talk much. He never said very much to me, except one time. I must have been about six years old, and one of my street friends a neighbor, came to me, and he said, "Let's go make money." I said, "How are we going to make money?" He said, "Come with me." He took me to a big restaurant on the Boulevard du Pontiffroy that was frequented by Jewish customers and he said to me, "All you have to do is you put your hand out and you go from table to table and they're going to put money in your hand." I said, "Okay." I didn't know any better. I went into the restaurant with my friend and we started going over to the tables, and everybody put money in our hands. Then we left and bought candy. That night I came home and my grandfather got so angry at me, because in the Jewish community in Metz, everybody knew each other, and he found out what I had done. Probably because my father was out of town on business, they told my grandfather what I had done, and he got so angry at me, he yelled at me. It was the first time and the only time that I saw anger in him. He said, "Why do you go around begging for money? You don't do that; you're not supposed to do that." I answered him and said, "I didn't know. My friend says people give you money. So if they're going to give you money, I'll take the money." I didn't know any better. One thing good for me came out of this. After getting chewed out by my grandfather, from then on every week my mother gave me a few pennies for an allowance. I used to go out and buy some candy or comic books with the money that she gave me. I used to like the Disney comic books, like Mickey Mouse and Pluto. I also read French comic books. One character was Bibi Fricotin, a thief with a covered eye. There was also Brick Bradford, the Phantom and Superman, I read all of them.

It was perhaps fitting that a devout man who spent so much of his life in synagogue should take his last breath while in prayer.

Grandfather Pierre passed away in synagogue on Wednesday, February 12, 1936. He went to services in the morning, put on his tallit, sat down and died. All of the Jews in Metz, hundreds of people, came to his funeral to pay their respects. I had never seen anything like it. He is buried in the Jewish cemetery in Metz, section 4, grave 18, on the Rue des Deux Cimetières.

My grandmother Celine Rychner was also very religious. After my grandfather died she came to live with my family. She wore a sheitel and she used to pray all day. She was going blind and becoming senile, and she would sing and tell stories all day long in Yiddish, over and over again. One of the songs that she used to sing started out with the line, “A brivele der mame,” which means, “a letter to mother.” She also spoke Polish and Russian, but I never heard her speak French.

## **B. *MOTHER CECILE LEA SZKLARZ***

I see my mother when I look at the eyes of my immediate and extended family. My mother had beautiful, distinctive eyes. I call them “Rychner eyes.” Her eyes were similar in shape to the eyes of Asian people. They were deep blue in color, and the iris of one of her eyes had a small spot on it. My sister Paulette had my mother’s eyes, right down to the same small spot on the iris of one of her eyes.

Cecile Lea Rychner was born in Sosnowiec, Poland on July 19, 1901. Her family was her life. She was completely devoted to taking care of them. She was a very hardworking woman. She had a household of children to take care of, as well as her elderly and infirm mother when she moved in with us after Grandfather Pierre died. With the cleaning, doing the laundry by hand, pressing all of the laundry, shopping, scrubbing, washing the kids, cleaning the floors, the dusting, that woman never stopped working. She was always on the go. I don’t know how she did it. She never complained.

Mother went food shopping every day because we didn’t have a refrigerator or a freezer. Whatever was needed for the day, she would go out and buy it that day, maybe milk, cheese (mostly camembert), vegetables, kosher meat, and we would finish whatever was left over. The only thing that may have been left over is maybe some bread, or some butter, or some cheese, but everything else was eaten. Her life was complicated by the fact that my father was always on the road on business

and he was hardly ever home. Sometimes he would be gone for a couple of weeks or several weeks. And when he came home he usually arrived on Saturday, and Sunday morning he was gone again.

The laundry was done at home. It was cooked in a large cauldron on the stove that had a funnel in the middle where the water would circulate. Mother would put in bleach or soap and the water would come to a boil. When the laundry was clean, it was put into pails and carried to one of the tributaries of the Moselle River at a place called Lavoir des Thermes where it was rinsed out in the river water with a washboard. The laundry was rinsed at home in the winter. Sometimes I would go with mother to Lavoir des Thermes and I helped her carry some of the laundry. She would walk on a gangway to the area on the river where the laundry was rinsed out. We would then return home with the laundry and hang it all in the huge attic in the apartment building to dry. All of the tenants in the building had laundry lines in the attic.

Close to our apartment in Metz there was a vegetable, fruit and fish market called Les Halles. The market is still there today, next to the Cathedral, and it is called Le Marché Couvert vu de la Place Jean-Paul-II. Sometimes I would go with my mother to the market on Friday morning to buy vegetables and live carp. The live carp were kept in tanks and we purchased the carp and took them home. My mother put the carp in a basin to keep them alive until she was ready to cook them.

Mother cooked and baked strictly Jewish-Polish style food. She was an excellent cook and baker. On Thursday night or Friday morning she would make the challahs. She would start off with the flour and made the dough, and then twist it, and then she baked it. She also made crumb cakes, big sheet cakes and cookies. She was an excellent baker and cook. Friday evening was always chicken soup with noodles and the boiled chicken. And she used to make gefilte fish, but not in jars like we have it in America. She cleaned the carp that were in the basin and then cut them up in sections. And to make gefilte fish, she would take parts of the fish and chop it up with a cleaver on a board, and mix something in there. She then took the mixture and used it to fill up the cavities of the remaining sections of the carp and then cooked it. That's why they call it gefilte fish; "gefilte" means the filling. We also had home-made farfel, pasta, potted meats, potato soup and potato leek soup. Everything was handmade, and all of it was delicious.

The chickens that we ate were bought live. Mother would take the chicken to the Schoichet for the ritual kosher slaughtering, then bring

the chicken home to take off the feathers and prepare it for the meal.

We had a milk can and one of my jobs was to buy milk in the morning from Monsieur Masouti's [phonetic] grocery store across the street from our apartment. Monsieur Masouti would take a ladle from a big milk can and use it to fill up the can that I brought with me. If there was any milk left over at the end of the day, mother would take the milk, pour it into glasses, and then she would cover the glasses with cloth and put them on the windowsill overnight. The milk would turn into a yogurt with cream on top and that was eaten as a dessert. It was quite good.

My brother Nathan and I had our bath on Friday mornings when mother would take us on a ten or fifteen-minute walk to the public baths in the center of Metz to scrub us down in the tubs there. Although there was a bath tub in the hallway of the apartment, we didn't have running hot water and it was probably easier to take us to the public baths which had running hot water. She scrubbed us one after the other, and then she had her own bath and we went home.

In addition to all of her household work, my mother also helped her father with his garment business. She used to sew buttons on the suits and other clothes that he produced.

Mother loved to dance. When Father was home for more than one night, sometimes they would go out dancing. She would get all dressed up and made up and they would go out, either to dances or to weddings.

Mother spoke French, but she mostly spoke in Yiddish when she talked to me. She also spoke German, Russian and Polish. Occasionally she took me and Nathan to the movies. One time she took Nathan and me to see a live stage production of Disney's Snow White -- in French -- at the Place de la Comédie.

### *C. FATHER TRAITEL "CHARLES" SZKLARZ*

There was a big photograph of my father's father on the wall of my parents' bedroom in our apartment in Metz. He is identified as Henri Szklarz on historical documents from France, but he never lived in France and I never met him or my grandmother, Sara. Henri Szklarz had a big square scar on his forehead. I asked my father, "what is the scar from?" Father said that the Cossacks, during a pogrom, came into town where his father lived, and when a Cossack tried to cut his head off, he lunged at



him and the saber glanced on his forehead and cut out a large part of skin, so he had a big, big scar on his forehead. When Henri Szklarz died my father went back to Poland for his funeral. The Polish authorities tried to stop him from leaving because he was still a Polish citizen and they wanted to force him into the Polish Army. They took him to a police station, but he escaped and returned home to France. As a result, Father lost his Polish citizenship and he was identified in France as “stateless.”

Traitel Szklarz was born in Siedlce, Poland, on September 7, 1902. He immigrated to France in 1922 and lived in a town near Metz called Boulay-Moselle. Unlike my mother, my father didn't have any relatives in France and I never knew his family. My father met my mother and they were married in Boulay-Moselle on August 26, 1924. He was not religious like his father-in-law, Grandfather Pierre. At the time he was married, father worked for a Monsieur Blontz who manufactured tombstones. By the time I was a young boy, father was a merchant and he dealt mainly with clothing for women. He would buy merchandise and then resell it. He travelled from village to village selling his goods. He had a small warehouse on the Rue des Jardins in Metz where he stored the clothing. He was always on the road, buying and selling. Once he went on a business trip to Paris to buy merchandise. He had a lot of money with him to buy the merchandise, and while he was eating in a restaurant somebody cut out his back pocket with a razor blade and stole his wallet.

I remember when my father bought a new car. One of his very good friends was Monsieur David Knecht, who was one of the shoemakers in Metz. Monsieur Knecht didn't know how to drive. Father took Monsieur Knecht out in his new car to teach him how to drive. While Monsieur Knecht was driving the car it went off the road and flipped over. Monsieur Knecht broke his leg, and that was the end of father's brand new car.

I have a family photograph that was taken along the Moselle River in Metz while the family was out for a walk in a place known as Metz-Plage. It was a beach along the river and we used to go swimming there in the summer. The photograph shows my father as I remember him. He was a big, strong man, portly but muscular. When he was younger he was a champion amateur wrestler.

## **D. JACQUES, NATHAN, PAULETTE AND ANNETTE**

My older brother Jacques was born on Bastille Day, July 14, 1925. Because he was four years older than I was, Jacques had his own buddies and he never wanted to take me along with him. One of Jacques' best friends was Max Knecht, the son of the shoemaker who was our father's best friend. Jacques went to school at l'École Paixhans on the Boulevard Paixhans in Metz. He used to be very active in soccer and he played on teams. I watched him play on weekends.

Jacques was bar mitzvahed in the Polish synagogue in Metz. On the first floor of our apartment building there was a huge apartment that was empty at the time and it was adjacent to a big courtyard. My father rented the apartment and hired a caterer and we had a big celebration. I have a photograph of Jacques wearing his talis. One of the guests gave Jacques a Kodak camera for a bar mitzvah present. The day after his bar mitzvah we had our picture taken together at the Place de la République in Metz.

My younger brother Nathan was born on April 10, 1932 at 8:30 a.m. He was a nice boy and he was my pal. He was very quiet. He followed me like a hawk. Wherever I went, he went. My friends were Nathan's friends; he didn't have any friends of his own. He would never go down to the street by himself. If I went down, he either went with me or he stayed home.

Nathan would go with me to the food market at Les Halles to get wooden crates that were used to ship vegetables. We tried to make things out of the crates, like make-believe cars. We used to bring them back home and play with them and then throw them out.

Nathan and I also went to the movies together. We used to go the Cine Lune around the corner. Most of the time when we went to the movies, the woman who used to check the tickets must have been a friend of the family because she would wave us in. She said, "Don't buy a ticket, get in there." I saw the first color film that was shown in Metz in that theatre. I went to see *Mutiny on the Bounty*. They played sound movies and some silent movies in that theater. There was a Catholic school which only ran silent movies on some afternoons and on weekends. For about one cent, you could go in and watch hours and hours of the old silent movies. Nathan and I would go and sit there for hours and hours and we watched one movie after another. We saw pirate movies and cowboy

movies. I remember watching Douglas Fairbanks, Sr. And, of course, we also watched Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton movies.

Although I went to see American films and read American comic books, America was a world away. I didn't know anything about America. Around Christmas time the grocery store always had big apples in the windows that were called *pommes Américaine*, American apples. I never ate one, but they were so huge and they looked so good. And I used to say, "oh, look, they bring these apples all the way from America." I also knew about New York because my Aunt Gertrude moved there, and we learned about New York in geography class in school.

My twin sisters, Paulette and Annette, were born on April 9, 1938. Annette was born first, at 10:40 a.m. Paulette was born at 11:45 a.m. I knew that my father was happy because he had said that he wanted a girl as he already had three boys. Now he had two daughters.

We also had a brother, Simon, who was born on November 22, 1933. Simon died in his crib on March 15, 1934 from what is now called sudden infant death syndrome, but was simply called crib death back then. Simon is buried in the same Jewish Cemetery where Grandfather Pierre is buried, and his grave is marked with a number in an area where other infants are buried.

## **E. *AUNTS, UNCLAS AND COUSINS***

Two of my mother's siblings, Uncle Aron Rychner and Aunt Gitla Kapelmeister, also lived in Metz. I knew them and their children.

Uncle Aron was born in 1882 in Zarki [also, Jarky], Poland. He was married to Aunt Chaziza, who was also called Chaya or Chaja. Aunt Chaya (née Schwimmer) was born in 1881 in Bandzin, Poland. She was a very sweet lady. Sometimes, on my way home from school, I would stop by their apartment to say hello to Aunt Chaya. They lived on the corner of the Rue de L'Arsenal and the Boulevard Paixhans, near the Polish synagogue, about a ten-minute walk from my apartment on en Vincentrue. Aunt Chaya would sit me down and make me a sandwich to eat. Her life was much like my mother's life; she worked hard and she was totally devoted to taking care of her family.

Uncle Aron was a painting and wallpaper contractor. He was a busy man. He painted and wallpapered apartments. He also had a contract with the French government to paint some of the tunnels in the Maginot Line. And in those days, they used paint with lead. He was very

thin with a taut face. Like Grandfather Pierre, he was a very quiet fellow.

Uncle Aron liked my drawings. I used to make templates for him, stencils, out of paper and he would use them. He would say to me, “why don’t you draw me a pattern?” He told me roughly what he wanted, then I made it and I cut it out and he used it. When he painted houses, he would make borders with flowers. Anything around the ceiling or chair height, he used to put bands around using stencils.

I was fascinated by how Uncle Aron hung wallpaper. He set up hinged horses and put a light plank on top of them. And then he would take the paper and by eye he figured out how many pieces he needed, counting out loud “un, deux, trois” as he did his calculations and cut the pieces. I never saw him use a ruler. He figured out how many sections of paper he needed, and he then cut a section, put the glue that he had made on the paper, folded it, put it on the floor, folded it, put it on the floor, until all of the sections were ready. Then he would hang the sections of paper that he had cut, pasted, folded and placed on the floor. He was very fast. It was perfect; all the pieces fit together and the pattern matched, too. He was also good at mixing color for paint jobs. Uncle Aron mixed his colors by eye, squeezing bit tubes of color tints into a base white to match what the customer requested. He was amazing, that guy.

Uncle Aron and Aunt Chaya had five children. From the eldest to the youngest my cousins were: Esther, Max, Regine, Sara and David. All of them were much older than me.

Cousin Esther, also called Ernestine, was born in Pilica, Poland, on October 15, 1902. She was married to Bernard Ellert, who was born on February 17, 1908. They had two children, Norbert, born on October 1, 1932, and Georgette, born on October 9, 1933. Bernard Ellert was a fine tailor and he made custom suits. Cousin Esther worked for Grandfather Pierre doing finish work on garments. Norbert was one of my best friends, and he was the same age as Nathan. Norbert had curly hair and he was also a very nice fellow. I used to go to his apartment and yell up to him from the street. If Norbert was home, then Nathan and I would either go upstairs to his apartment on the first floor or he would come out and play with us in the plaza in front of the apartment building. Cousin Esther would not let Norbert leave the front of the building, and she would look out the window and keep her eyes on him. Cousin Georgette was younger than Norbert, but he could not go anywhere without Georgette tagging along with him. The four cousins, Nathan, Norbert, Georgette and I, played together in the plaza, which had a

fountain and benches. We used to shoot marbles, stuff like that.

Cousin Max was much older than me, and he worked for his father, Uncle Aron, in the painting and wallpaper business. Max married Simone Neuman; I went to school with her brother. Max joined the French air force and I remember seeing him in a fancy uniform.

Cousins Regine and Sara were beautiful girls. Regine, also called Rywka, had curly light brown hair. Sara had black hair. Cousin Regine was married to a man named Jacob Lejzorek. He always played cards and had a reputation of being a very good player. They had a daughter named Rolande who was born on August 11, 1938. Rolande scratched Cousin Regine's lip and she didn't take care of the cut. She covered the wound with lipstick then contracted a staph infection and died on June 17, 1939. She is buried in the Jewish Cemetery in Metz in section 9, grave 19, near Grandfather Pierre.

Cousin Sara, also called Sura, was born on September 1, 1913 in Sosnowiec, Poland. She was not married and she lived with Uncle Aron and Aunt Chaya. She used to do the fine stitching and finish work on fancy suits for Grandfather Pierre, like button holes and lapels. Her brother, Cousin David, was born on July 6, 1923 in Metz and he also lived at home. He was a good looking guy with curly blond hair.

Tante Gitla Kapelmeister – Aunt Gertrude – was my mother's other sister in Metz. Aunt Gertrude was born in Sosnowiec, Poland on April 10, 1894. She immigrated to Metz with her three children, cousins Irving (born Israel in Poland in 1917), Betty (born Brajndla [pronounced Bronche] in Poland in 1918) and Regine (born Rywka [pronounced Rivka] in 1921, she later changed her name to Jeanne). Their apartment was at No. 9 en Vincentrue, very close to our apartment. Although Aunt Gertrude immigrated to Metz from Poland, her husband Leon Kapelmeister went from Poland to New York.

Cousin Irving was older than both Jacques and me. He went to trade school and became a plumber. He was very nice and friendly to me. Once he called me into the kitchen. He took an apple and he took a knife and he peeled the whole apple without breaking the skin all the way down. Irving then held up and proudly showed me the long, twisted ribbon of apple peel and he said, "See what I can do?" I thought it was fabulous at the time.

In September 1934 Aunt Gertrude and Cousins Irving, Betty and Jeanne, immigrated to America. Grandfather Pierre and Grandmother Celine paid for their passage, and the intent was for Aunt Gertrude and



her children to rejoin her husband and their father in New York. The night before they left they stayed with us in our apartment at No. 7 en Vincentrue. Aunt Gertrude would send money to my grandparents to repay them for the trip to America. She put dollar bills in the envelopes with the letters that she wrote. Grandmother Celine would show me the American money. She wore very big flowing skirts down to her ankles, and underneath that, she had a big money bag where she kept her money. All her funds were with her.

My mother had other siblings who lived in France, Germany and England. Uncle Mote Rychner lived in Boulogne-sur-Mer. He was a merchant like my father, but he sold socks and ties. He had a son named Jacques. There were twin brothers born in 1885, one who lived in France named Zelig Rychner and one who lived in Germany named David Israel Rychner. Uncle Zelig had a son named Joseph. Uncle David was married to Genia (née Strube, born 1893). They had five children, Ella, Max, Siegfried, Cilly and Lydia Sara. Siegfried moved to Israel before World War II and changed his name to Shai Ronen. Max moved to Argentina before World War II, and I saw him when he stopped in Metz on his way from Germany to Argentina. He posed in a picture with Cousin Regine. Cousin Lydia stayed in Germany with her parents and her two sisters.

Aunt Rachel Ast lived in London, England. She had three children, Mick, Kitty and Sally. Mick was married to Frieda, Kitty was married to Joe Dobber and Sally was married to Alf Morris. Sally and Alf had a son, Martin.

Because they were family, and because they didn't live in France, Aunt Gertrude and Aunt Rachel, and their children, who were my first cousins, came to play pivotal roles in the story of the Szklarz family. I will talk more about them later in my testimony.

## ***F. THE NEIGHBORHOOD: SYNAGOGUES, FRIENDS, SCHOOLS AND SHOPS***

Our apartment was located at No. 7 en Vincentrue in the section of Metz that was called Ancienne Ville. The neighborhood is located on the north side of the Moselle opposite a point of land where the Seille Lorraine River, a tributary, flows into the right bank of the Moselle River after it passes the 13<sup>th</sup> century fortress known as Porte des Allemandes (Gate of the Germans). The apartment had one bedroom where my



parents slept, a large kitchen, a dining room and a living room. The three boys slept in the living room. When Grandmother Celine moved in with us she also slept in the living room, but her bed was in a setback in the wall with a curtain across it. When Paulette and Annette were born they slept in cribs in my parents' bedroom.

I knew two synagogues in Metz. One was the French synagogue, which was on the Rue de L'Arsenal near our apartment. The Rabbi at the French synagogue was Elie Bloch. Cousin Betty used to sing in the choir at the French synagogue. We went to the Polish synagogue, named Adath Yechouroun, which was further down the Rue de L'Arsenal. The Polish synagogue was founded in 1912 by some families of Jews emigrating from Eastern Europe. It was too small to accommodate the Jewish community in Metz for the High Holidays of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. There was an empty Protestant church nearby. It was located on the northern end of one of the small islands in the Moselle, near Lavoir des Thermes. One of my play areas was near the church. The Polish congregation rented the church to use for the High Holidays. Ammonia ampules were given to the adults to use if they passed out during services. The kids used to get the ampules from the adults, and we broke the glass ampules with the small metal files that they came with and we sniffed the ammonia.

My brother Jacques went to Hebrew school in the Polish synagogue. I went to a different Hebrew school that was in an attic in a building next door to the French synagogue. About one dozen of us studied Hebrew in the attic at long tables under candlelight because there was no electricity in the attic. It was very dark and it was hard to read. I didn't like the teacher there. He intimidated me. He used to pull my ears and he used to pull the hair on my sideburns. When he did that I would ask him, "What did you do that for?" He answered, "You're not reading properly." I went home and I complained to my grandfather. I told him, "I don't want to go over there, these guys, they're crazy, they pull your hair." I also told him, "I will finish a year there, but then I want to go to the new Hebrew school." Grandfather Pierre agreed, and I finished the year and then I went to the new school, which was also next door to the French synagogue, but it was a much better school. It was brand new and it had electric lights, regular classrooms, nice benches and a blackboard.

I started kindergarten when I was five or six years old. The school was two blocks away from our apartment on en Vincentrue. I used to like school work, especially the writing. They taught the alphabet and how to

write letters and numbers in long hand. They gave us little sticks to teach us how to add. It was very good and I enjoyed every minute of it.

My first encounter with anti-Semitism happened when I was in kindergarten. There was a bunch of kids, they must have been seven or eight, up to 10 years old. Sometimes, not every day, they were waiting at the gates, and when I walked out, they would call me *sale Juif*, dirty Jew. I didn't understand. I was dressed better than they were because my father was in the clothing business. If they were waiting when school was over, I never walked home; I used to run the two blocks home. I mean, one on one, I probably would have fought them, but there were three, four against one and they were also throwing rocks at me. And I ran fast. I was never hit by a rock, but they came close. I could hear them behind me, right on my heels. I used to run, run down the hallway and up to our apartment.

I attended kindergarten for about two years and then my parents enrolled me in the *École Préparatoire* in Metz. It was a private school and you had to pay tuition to attend. My parents enrolled me there because I was a good student in kindergarten. The school was located in a large building next to the Moselle River.

I didn't like the *École Préparatoire*. All of the subjects were taught by one teacher in one classroom. The teacher was anti-Semitic. He stuck me in a corner in the back of the classroom and would never call on me. He totally ignored me, as if I didn't exist. I knew he was anti-Semitic because he put all of my friends, all of whom were also Jewish, in the back of the classroom with me. We discussed amongst ourselves how poorly the teacher was treating us. I never said anything to my parents about what was happening in school. I did my best, but I didn't do well in school because of that teacher.

*École Préparatoire* also had a gang of rock-throwers who hung out across the street from the school. One of my friends in the class was Jean Levy, and we lived in the same direction from the school. The two of us used to run home together. The gang didn't wander far from the school, and they gave up chasing us after just a couple of blocks.

Most of the shops were right on the street and down the block from where we lived. *En Vincentrue* was a commercial street. There were stores on the ground level of the apartment buildings. There were boucheries to buy meat and charcuteries to buy sausages, cold cuts and *Quiche Lorraine*. I always wanted a *Quiche Lorraine*, but Mother said it wasn't kosher and she wouldn't buy it for me. There were boulangeries

which sold bread, épicerie for groceries, les Ecos which sold housewares, cordonniers which were shoemakers, coiffeurs which were barbers and hairdressers, a tailleur which was the tailor, and un marchand de bicyclettes, which was the bicycle store in our apartment building. There were three cafes right next to each other: Le Café des Thermes, Le Café des Bons Amis and Le Café Bleu. There was a boucherie chevaline which sold only horse meat and horse meat products. A boucherie chevaline was prohibited from selling any other meats. When I was about seven years old, a doctor told Mother that I needed to eat some horse steaks for nutrition. Even though horse meat wasn't kosher, my health was at issue and Mother cooked me some thin horse steaks in a frying pan. There were two candy makers in the upper apartments in other buildings on en Vincentrue. I went to watch one of them make hard candy, hoping to get a free sample. I never got one. There was also a store that sold comic books and fireworks. I purchased my comic books in that store.

Mother purchased all of her meats from Monsieur Braff, the kosher butcher whose shop was on the corner on en Vincentrue. There was another kosher butcher near the synagogue, Monsieur Brunvasser, but mother didn't shop there. I was friendly with Monsieur Brunvasser's son, Francois. Jean Levy's father was a violin player. Another one of my friends was Joseph Russak and he also lived on en Vincentrue. His father was a salesman. Francois, Jean, Joseph and I all attended the same Hebrew school together. Francois, like Jean, was also my classmate at the École Préparatoire.

Monsieur Braff had black hair and a small, square moustache. I remember him well. I used to watch him cut the meats. Like most people who lived on my block, we didn't have a telephone in our apartment, but Monsieur Braff had one in his shop. Monsieur Braff made his telephone available to his customers as a convenience; as far as I knew he didn't charge for the occasional use of his phone. If somebody was calling my family, they would call Monsieur Braff and he would come to our apartment and tell us, "There's a phone call for you." Phone calls were rare back in those days, and getting a call was not an everyday occurrence like it is today.

Across the street from Monsieur Braff was Silverberg, the kosher bakery shop. It was a nice shop and it had all kinds of breads, big round ones, long French breads called flutes and, of course, baguettes. Mother purchased her breads from Silverberg. Sometimes she made something

and needed to use his large oven to bake it or cook it. Monsieur Silverberg would put the dish in his oven for her. Mother sent me to Silverberg with a dish called cholent, which is a traditional Jewish stew with beans, potatoes and meat that required slow cooking all night long in a cast iron pot. Two houses down from us there was a German bakery, Monsieur Reimeringer. He made fancy pastries and I sometimes bought some pastries from him as a treat. On some holidays my family enjoyed eating jelly donuts and crème filled donuts from Reimeringer's bakery.

In addition to the enticing aromas that were coming from the two neighborhood bakeries, en Vincentrue also smelled like fresh coffee. There was a coffee roaster on the corner. It was a factory and wholesaler, no retail sales. I used to stand by the window and watch the big coffee roasters spin around and around after they were filled with African coffee beans that were stored in bags stacked in the store.

Monsieur Isbicki was the shoemaker. His shoe shop was across the street on en Vincentrue and he lived with his family in the back of the shop. He had a very nice wife and two daughters. His younger daughter, Sara, was my girlfriend. We hung out and I used to go over there and we played in the hallway. Sometimes Sara's mother would make us lunch and I would eat there. It was a nice little shoe shop. Monsieur Isbicki was a very talented man. I used to watch him work. He was a working machine; work, work, work, and work. He repaired shoes and he made custom shoes. He had forms that he used to stretch the leather out, and he would make the whole shoe. He used to repair my family's shoes, but we bought our new ready-made shoes from the Bata shoe store.

There was also an appliance store on the street that was owned by two partners, one was Jewish and the other was not. We called the Jewish partner Monsieur Feinkuchen (phonetic). He sang and performed in the Yiddish theater and I used to hear him rehearse his singing in the back of the appliance store. When I heard him I would stand by the door and listen to him singing in Yiddish. If he saw me he would wave me into the store to listen to him sing.

Monsieur Masouti owned the grocery store in the neighborhood. He was Italian and he spoke some French but with a very heavy Italian accent. He was a tall, lanky man with a big black moustache that curved up. He sold milk, cheese, butter, wine and all the groceries that you needed. In addition to sending me there to buy milk, my mother occasionally sent me to Monsieur Masouti's grocery store to buy carbonated lemonade or, on rare occasions, some wine. My family didn't

drink a lot of wine. Monsieur Masouti had big wooden wine barrels on a lower shelf in the store, and sold the wine by the degrees of alcohol content and not by brand names. The higher the degree of alcohol, the more the wine cost. Monsieur Masouti would open up the spigot and fill the bottle, which was either a bottle that you brought to the store or one that he supplied.

## **G.     *NEWS ON THE RADIO***

We had gas lights in our apartment. All of the apartments in my neighborhood used gas. You ignited the gas lamps with a match and that's how our apartment was lighted. Then, in 1936 or 1937, we were wired with electricity. As soon as we had electricity in our apartment my father went out and purchased a radio.

It was a Philips box table top radio, made in Holland. When father turned it on, I heard the music and I thought there were little musicians in there. I didn't know. I pictured in my mind that there must be little guys playing music. I also heard a station that was broadcasting a news report from the front lines of the Spanish Civil War, and I heard the guns firing. It was a horrible, horrible sound.

But the most frightening sound coming from our new radio was the voice of Adolph Hitler, the Chancellor of Germany. His virulent anti-Semitic speeches were broadcast over the radio. We heard him speaking within an hour after my father turned on our new radio for the first time. All you could hear coming out of his mouth were phrases like, "verruckt Juden," which meant, "crazy or disgusting Jews." Everybody cringed when he came on the radio. My parents spoke German and they were visibly frightened and quite concerned by what he was saying. I understood a little German, and through all of his loud screaming I heard him say, "international rotten Jews." Although I knew about anti-Semitism, I was too young to realize the significance of Hitler's speeches at that time.

Less than twenty-years before I first heard Adolph Hitler ranting on the radio, France had defeated Germany in World War I. Victory came at an unimaginable price when measured by the loss of human life. Approximately 1,400,000 French soldiers were killed, another 4,300,000 were wounded. One out of twenty of France's total population were killed. The Great War created 700,000 widows and more than 1,000,000 orphans. Thirty-six percent of the soldiers aged between nineteen and



twenty-two were killed, wiping out almost an entire generation of France's young men in 1,566 days of war.<sup>1</sup> This created a vacuum in the labor force which my family helped to fill.

The French countryside also bore the ignominious scars of war. Not far from the Jewish cemetery there were remnants of the endless number of trenches that have come to epitomize that war. I used to walk over there with Nathan and my friends. We made toy swords and went into the trenches to play war. Some of the trenches were still used by the French army when the soldiers were on maneuvers. We snuck into those trenches when the soldiers weren't around. Sometimes we found spent and unspent bullets, shells, torn pieces of uniforms and fragments of shattered bones. The French artillery fired more than 330,000,000 rounds of shells during the war.<sup>2</sup> We knew that the shells were dangerous and we didn't pick them up, we just left them there.

Metz was a garrison town and soldiers from throughout the French Colonial Empire were billeted in forts and barracks in the city and its environs. The soldiers were formed into different regiments, each one representing the colony of their respective origin. They were constantly parading and playing music all day long. From one street to the next you could hear different music played by different regiments at the same time. It seemed like they were competing to outdo each other. The French military music was very stirring. I also noticed that more and more soldiers were arriving in Metz. Very soon they would be putting down their musical instruments and picking up their guns.

## *H. CONDÉ-NORTHEN*

The army was bringing in a lot of soldiers to Metz and the streets were crowded with them. They were going on maneuvers all over the area. I saw some tanks, but they didn't go through our part of town because the streets were too narrow. With the arrival of more soldiers, more bars and restaurants opened. We were told in school to stay away from the soldiers because they were getting drunk in the bars and restaurants. France was mobilizing for another war with Germany. Even my father, who was almost 37 years old at the time, went to enlist in the army. The army rejected him because he had five kids. It took several years before I began to understand why Father did that.

I turned ten years old on July 10, 1939. The school term at École Préparatoire ended around that time. When I was a child I was frequently



sick with bronchitis, a respiratory illness. Every winter I would wheeze and cough and get a fever. This time, the doctor suggested that I should be sent to the countryside for the summer because the fresh air would be good for me. My father had a friend who was a farmer in Condé-Northen, which was seventeen miles east of Metz. Travel east fifteen more miles and you were at the border of the Saarland, which was part of Germany. Six miles northeast of Condé-Northen was Boulay-Moselle, where my parents were married. Father took me to his friend's farm and left me to stay with him and his wife. The farmer didn't have any children, but the farmer next door had a daughter who was my age. One of her jobs on the farm was to tend to the goats and the sheep and take them to a field to graze for the day. She asked me to go with her, and the farmer with whom I was staying said, "Why don't you go with her?" So I went with her. One day she showed me a sign in the field. The sign said that when Joan of Arc was a little girl she used to tend sheep and goats in that field. Joan of Arc was born in Domrémy, which was about eighty miles southwest of Condé-Northen. Maybe it was true, or maybe it was like a sign in America that said, "George Washington slept here."

While I was spending my days in the fields of Condé-Northen, I started to hear the booming of artillery fire in the distance. I heard the big guns every day, and every day they got louder and louder. I knew that war with Germany was brewing. I told the farmer, "I don't want to be caught here without my parents. I want to go home." I told him, "I don't like the noise" and "I don't want the Germans to come here." And so I said, "I'd like to call home and get my father here to pick me up." I had the telephone number for Monsieur Braff's store, the kosher butcher. I went to the post office and called Monsieur Braff. I told him, "Please go tell my parents that I want to come home because I hear the guns." I called several times and then, one day, my father came in his car to get me and he took me home to Metz.

## ***I. EVACUATION***

There were constant discussions about Hitler and Germany. There were minstrels in Metz who sang in the streets for a few centimes. Once in a while a crazy minstrel showed up by our apartment and he sang anti-Semitic songs in German. He sang, "I will beat you to death, you Jew, you Jew," stuff like that. I learned later in life that my father had a cousin in Philadelphia and he begged my father to come to the United

States with his family. This cousin said that he would send my father the tickets. My father didn't want to leave Metz. He didn't speak English, his business and his life were in France, and he didn't know what he would do in the United States. He told his cousin that he could not leave France.

On September 3, 1939, Britain and France declared war on Germany when Germany invaded Poland. Almost immediately, the entire population of Metz had to report to get fitted for gas masks. My mother took us to a depot to get our gas masks. There were preset depots around Metz for the distribution of gas masks to civilians. We went to a depot around the corner from en Vincentrue and across the Pont Moreau over the Moselle. To the left off of the Rue du Pont Moreau there was a big warehouse and they had gas masks for grownups and for kids. We waited on line and they gave each of us a canister. There was a grey rubber mask inside the canister and it smelled terrible. They showed you how to put it on your face, and then you put it back in the canister and had to carry it around wherever you went.

The government impounded the new vans that my father had just purchased for his business. The vans were requisitioned for the French army. They took them away from him, and he had to use his car to get around. There were discussions about leaving Metz, but my father had his business there so there was the factor of staying and earning a living or leaving everything behind.

Shortly after I was issued a gas mask I had to turn it back in. The gas masks were only for the people who lived near the front lines. My parents decided to evacuate Metz. They didn't want their family to be in the midst of a battleground and the government was encouraging people to evacuate. They didn't discuss their decision with me. One day I was just told, "We're leaving, we're not staying." We left suddenly. Father had a small car, a Matford. We just packed a few essentials; some clothes, and a few pots and pans. We left everything behind. The Szklarz family -- my parents and their five children, Jacques, Nathan, Paulette, Annette and I -- piled into the Matford. My grandmother refused to go with us. Grandfather Pierre was buried in Metz and she would not leave. So she stayed behind, alone, in our apartment. She was blind and could not take care of herself. Uncle Aron and his family were also evacuating.

We evacuated Metz, my home for the first ten years of my life. I didn't have time to say goodbye to my friends. The Moselle River was left behind me. I could not imagine what the future held for us.

Enfant Kinder					
No du registre des naissances	NOM	PRÉNOMS	Lieu de la naissance	Date de la naissance	Signature de l'Officier de l'État civil
1313	Szklarz	Jacques	Nety	11 juillet 1933	le 11 juillet 1933. L'Officier de l'État civil: Le Chef de Division (seccu) Rothman
1314	Szklarz	Jean	Nety	10 juillet 1933 à 18 heures	le 10 juillet 1933 L'Officier de l'État civil: Le Chef de Division (seccu) Rothman
500	Szklarz	Nathan	Nety	12 avril 1933 à 18 heures	le 12 avril 1933 L'Officier de l'État civil: Le Chef de Division (seccu) Rothman

Enfant Kinder					
No du registre des naissances	NOM	PRÉNOMS	Lieu de la naissance	Date de la naissance	Signature de l'Officier de l'État civil
4157	Szklarz	Simon	Nety	22 novembre 1933 à 11 heures	le 22 novembre 1933. L'Officier de l'État civil: Le Chef de Division (seccu) Rothman
763	Szklarz	Annette (1 <sup>re</sup> jumelle)	Nety	9 avril 1938 à 10 h. 40	le 9 avril 1938. L'Officier de l'État civil: Le Chef de Division (seccu) Rothman
764	Szklarz	Paulette (2 <sup>e</sup> jumelle)	Nety	9 avril 1938 à 11 h. 45	le 9 avril 1938. L'Officier de l'État civil: Le Chef de Division (seccu) Rothman

Livret de Famille  
(Family Record Book)  
Record of Births of the Szklarz Children





Metz, France about 1933  
Left to right: Cecile, Jacques, Nathan and Jean Szklarz



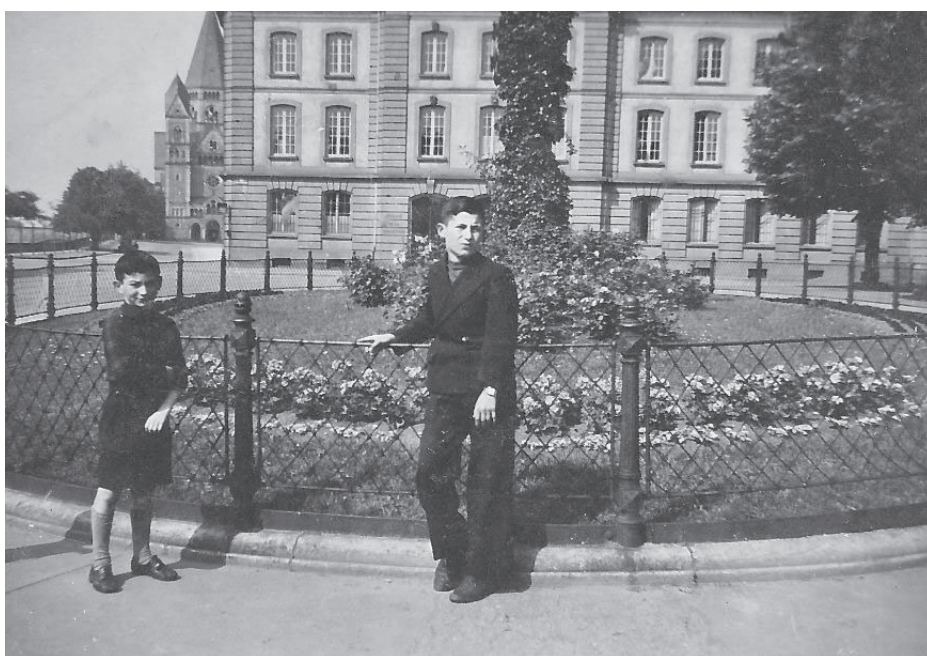
Szklarz/Rychner family  
Metz, France about 1934

Front row, right to left: Nathan, Jean and Jacques  
Second row, right to left: Traitel, Cecile, Celine and Pierre Rychner





Metz, France about 1930  
Left to right: Jacques, Cecile and Jean Szklarz



Metz, France  
Place de la Préfecture de Moselle  
Jean and Jacques Szklarz  
July 1938



Metz, France  
Jacques Szklarz  
Bar Mitzvah  
July 1938





Metz, France  
French Synagogue  
Rue de L'Arsenal,  
now Rue de Rabbin Élie Bloch



Metz, France  
Interior of Polish Synagogue Adath Yechouroun  
Rue de L'Arsenal,  
now Rue de Rabbin Élie Bloch





Metz, France  
Moselle River  
Lavoir des Thermes (restored)



Metz, France  
Le Quai Félix Maréchal  
Fountain in Plaza in front of  
the Ellert family apartment



Metz, France, circa 1930s  
Rue Pontiffroy  
Traitel Szklarz, to the right,  
with his best friend, David Knecht,  
in front of M. Knecht's shoe repair shop

Photo courtesy of Max Knecht





Metz, France as seen in 1974  
 Lot where Szklarz family apartment stood  
 7 EnVincentrue  
 Southeast corner of EnVincentrue and Rue du Pont Moreau



Metz, France as seen in 1974  
 Les Halles, where Jean Szklarz got empty  
 vegetable crates to play with Nathan

## *CHAPTER II*

### *VIROLET*

#### *A. BAR-LE-DUC*

Initially we didn't stray far from Metz. We went to Bar-le-Duc, a town approximately 84 miles southwest of Metz. My father still had his business that was based in Metz. He commuted to Metz and stopped in to help Grandmother Celine every day. We moved into a house that father rented. The only furniture in the house was a dresser with big drawers. The baby girls, who were now about 18 months old, slept in the drawers with blankets, Paulette in one drawer and Annette in the other drawer. Father went to the lumber yard and bought pine boards and a saw. I watched him measure and cut everything up and he made big boxes. He went to a farm and brought back a big bag of straw and put the straw into each one of the boxes. We then put covers over the straw and they were our beds.

The house had a wood burning stove but it didn't have an oven and my mother wanted to bake cakes. She told me to find a baker who would let us use his oven to bake her cakes. I walked around Bar-le-Duc and found a bakery a couple of streets away from our house. I went in and asked, "Would you bake my mother's cake?" The baker said yes. I returned with a big butter crumb sheet cake. I went back a few hours later to get the cake and asked the baker, "How much do I owe you?" The baker said, "If your mother gives me the recipe, there's no charge." I told my mother what the baker said, and I returned to the bakery with her recipe. The cake was good.

We must have been in Bar-le-Duc for several weeks because Nathan and I went to school there. It was a nice school with good teachers. The teachers told a story about a farmer woman whose husband was killed in World War I. She had one son who died recently and she

was all alone on the farm. The teacher said, if anybody could see to it, to go over there and help her on the farm, because she was all by herself. I went with Nathan to the farm several times after school and on weekends to help her as much as we could. We helped with cleaning the barn.

## **B.     *MOULIN DE LA REINIÈRE***

When the time came for us to leave Bar-le-Duc, my father went to Metz and he came back with Grandmother Celine. I don't know how he did it, but I believe that my mother would not have left Bar-le-Duc without her. Our next home was going to be far, far away from Metz. The eight of us crammed into the Matford and we drove to our next destination, a place called Virolet, which was three-hundred seventy miles away.

The roads were jammed with refugees from France and from neighboring countries, like the Netherlands and Belgium. Everybody was fleeing from the anticipated war zone in the northeast of France near the border with Germany. At the same time, the French army was trying to get through. The roads were blocked with thousands of refugees in cars, on bicycles and on foot and they were all competing with the army for room on the roads. The army could not get through. France didn't have many highways at that time, and it didn't have any super highways like the German autobahns that were capable of moving military vehicles quickly.

Virolet is a small hamlet seven miles south of the city of Poitiers, which is the capital of the Vienne Department located in the Poitou-Charentes region of west-central France. Poitiers is two-hundred miles southwest of Paris. Poitiers was where Joan of Arc was subjected to an inquest in 1429 that branded her a heretic. Virolet didn't have any shops. There were shops and a police station in the town of Ligugé, which was located approximately four miles east of Virolet. Eventually, we arrived at our new home. It was located in a compound of buildings, including barns, collectively called the Moulin de la Reinière (also spelled Reynière and Regnière), just off of the Route Nationale 10 on a street that is now called the Allée du Moulin de la Reynière. There was a castle nearby called Chateau de la Reinière, and the Moulin must have been a part of that estate at one time, hence the name. A moulin is a grain mill, and I was intrigued by how it worked to make flour. The Moulin was alongside a large fish pond with a dike in the middle. There was a sluice where the

water came through and turned the water wheel, the gearing mechanism and the grindstone inside the mill to grind grain. The farmers from the area used to bring over their sacks of grain to the Moulin to be ground up for feed or for flour for bread. The Moulin was run by Madame Elisabeth Boileau and her son, Emile, and I watched them make flour. Monsieur Boileau was mobilized in the French army when we arrived. They also had a daughter, Janette, who was my age. Emile did most of the work in the Moulin while his father was away. The Boileau family had pigs, pigeons and chickens, a hay field and a beautiful garden. They also watched over the fish pond, which was stocked with carp, and they were allowed to take fish from the pond. Fishing was prohibited for anyone else.

I didn't know why we went to Virolet in particular. I soon learned, however, that there were other Jewish refugees in the area, including other Jews from Metz. The government must have had a plan to locate refugees from Metz in Virolet. My school friend, Joseph Russak, and his family moved to Virolet. Monsieur Benyamim Katz, a tailor from Metz, was there with his wife Sarah and their two sons, Charles and Fred. My cousins, Monsieur Lejzorek and his daughter, lived in a house located on the main street in Virolet.

Our house was a small two-story building located next to the Moulin. My family rented the rooms on the upstairs floor. My father went to see a local farmer, Monsieur Bertrand, who had the keys. He was either the owner of the Moulin, or he was holding the keys and managing it on behalf of the owner. When father returned with the keys we moved in. There were two rooms, one big, huge room with a window where there was a bed in the corner for my parents, a crib for the girls, and one other bed. That room had a wood stove and it also became our kitchen and living room. No sink, no running water, no bathrooms and no electricity. There was a second smaller room with more beds in it. Father eventually went and purchased furniture for the apartment.

I slept in the big room with my parents and sisters. Jacques, Nathan and Grandmother Celine slept in the smaller room. I used to wake up during the night. There were rats in the attic and they ran around and made noise. There were a lot of rats in the neighborhood because they were attracted by the grain in the Moulin. There were also wild boars in the woods, and when they came out at night to forage they sometimes banged on the front door of the house.

Soon after we moved in, Uncle Aron and Aunt Chaya arrived by



train with Cousins David and Sarah. There was a train station in Virolet that was a five-minute walk from the Moulin. They moved into the two ground floor rooms. There was one big room with a fireplace and a lot of beds, and a second smaller room. Next to arrive were Cousin Esther and her husband, Bernard Ellert, and their children, Cousins Norbert and Georgette. All eight of them lived in those two rooms downstairs.

The house was surrounded by woods. I went into the woods with Nathan and together we collected wood from dead fallen trees, brought the wood back, cut it up, and used it for the wood stove. After a while, we needed more wood. My father went to see Monsieur Bertrand and purchased a wood lot from him. Monsieur Bertrand marked off four trees to create a boundary, and inside of the boundary he marked the bigger trees that could not be cut down. We could use all of the smaller trees for firewood. Father cut down the trees, and then Monsieur Bertrand came over with his cart and horse, we loaded the wood onto the cart and brought it to the house. We had a saw horse and a hand saw to cut the wood and we stored the wood in a one of the barns that were on the property.

Monsieur Bertrand took us to see a small water spring about three or four hundred yards away from the house, on the other side of a small stream that we crossed on a foot bridge. The spring had salamanders on the bottom of it. That was our fresh water supply. There was a big galvanized barrel in the big room upstairs. We had to take the water from the spring in a bucket and carry it to the house and pour the water into the barrel upstairs. That became one of my jobs. At first, my father made a harness with a bucket on either end that I put on my shoulders, but it was too heavy for me to use. I carried the water in a two-and-a-half-gallon bucket. Sometimes Jacques helped to get the water to fill the barrel. The water was good, and we didn't have to boil it before we drank it. People from around the neighborhood also took their water from that spring. Mother cooked the laundry in water in a pot on the wood stove, and then she rinsed it out and hung it outside to dry. We had to use chamber pots because the house didn't have a toilet. To bathe, we used boiled water from the stove and poured it into a big portable tub, stepped in and washed up as best as we could, then spilled the water out of the tub to ready it for the next person to use. It was horrible and it was not easy, but we kept clean.

After a few months of living without electricity, my father went to the electric company, which had power lines running along the highway at the end of our street. He paid for the installation of power



poles and a power line to bring electricity to our house. We had one light bulb in the big room.

Nathan and I made a discovery in the attic when we went up there to play. In one corner of the attic there was a pile of Army clothes from the Napoleonic era, including steel bust plates and hats with feather plumes. There were also sabers, pistols and rifles. It looked like an armory up there.

There was a large ancient cherry tree in the yard in front of our house. Jacques' friend Max Knecht came to visit us in Virolet sometime during the period of time after we arrived and before May of 1940. Max had a camera with him and he took a picture of Mother, Jacques, Nathan, Paulette, Annette and me in front of the cherry tree. Jacques held Paulette and Annette on his knees for the picture.

### C. *SCHOOL*

The day after we arrived in Virolet my parents took Nathan and me to register for school. The school was located on the Route Nationale 10 which ran through Virolet on the north side of the railroad tracks and up a steep hill, about a ten to fifteen-minute walk from the Moulin. It was a one-classroom school with one big room with a wood stove, a large courtyard and a bathroom outside. The teacher was Madame Frapier. She was in her forties, and she lived in a big two-story house that was on the same property as the school room. The house had frontage on the street and the classroom was in the schoolyard in the back of the house. Madame Frapier was married, and her husband repaired bicycles in a shed that was in the schoolyard. They had a son who was my age. The entire property was surrounded by a stone wall that was about five-feet high, and there was a steel gate to go in and out of the school yard.

Madame Frapier taught all of the grades, from seven years old to fourteen years old, in that one-classroom school. There were about six rows of desks and chairs, with about six or seven students per row, for a total of approximately forty students. Most of the students walked to school. They were from farms around Virolet. The students who lived farther away rode their bicycles to school and parked the bicycles in a rack in the schoolyard. Madame Frapier was fantastic. She was an excellent teacher and I learned a lot from her. She was a very dedicated teacher. Because there were so many rows of students in the class, she gave out a lot of work to do on your own. Eventually, she got to you and

she would say, “Okay, page so and so, start, recite from line three down.” Then she would stop and said, “Hey, you, Paul, you continue with that.” You had to work hard and learn everything that she was teaching. She was very strict, but very nice.

Madame Frapier taught her son English during breaks in class, and a little before and after class. I listened in on some of those lessons. She said to him, “Solomon Grundy was born on a Monday. He went to school on a Tuesday.” Although that’s all I remember from Madame Frapier’s English lessons, I have very fond memories of Madame Frapier. She and her husband were very, very nice people. They were very patriotic and very encouraging. They went out of their way to help me and my brother and our other friends to keep our spirits up in the face of all of the turmoil that we were living through. They were real French people, true *Républicains*. By this I mean that they were for the French *République*, the nation that rose after the French Revolution. An analogy is to Americans who are fiercely proud of their democratic nation, a country that was also born from a revolution against tyranny.

Nathan and I walked to school together every day, rain or shine. Sometimes the miller’s daughter, Janette, walked with us. The school day started at 8:00 a.m. The lunch break was at 12:00 p.m. and lasted about one hour. Nathan and I walked home for lunch. Class ended at 4:00 p.m.

While Nathan and I went to school, my father and Jacques went to work for a foundry in Poitiers. Because all of the gasoline had been requisitioned by the French army, my father bought two bicycles and he and Jacques rode their bicycles to work every day. The foundry cast aerial bombs for the French Air Force. Uncle Aron took on odd jobs painting with David in Virolet and in Ligugé. David also had friends in Poitiers, and he used to walk to Poitiers to visit his friends there.

## **D.    *LIFE IN VIROLET***

I knew of four Bertrand men in Virolet; a father and his three sons. I never knew their first names. The father owned a lot of property in the area. As I have said, the oldest son was the person who gave us the keys to our house. He lived next to the railroad tracks and he was also the station master and he sold the train tickets. A second Bertrand son had a son who was my age, also named Jean, and he sat in front of me in school. A third Bertrand son had a daughter, Yvette, who was also my

age. She sat behind me in school. Yvette was the best student in our age group. Her cousin, Jean Bertrand, and I, had the same grade average and we were tied for the second-best students in our grade. In addition to owning farmlands and woodlands in the area, the Bertrand family also owned a restaurant, a hotel, a winery, cows and a stone quarry located in Virolet. The quarry supplied stones for highway construction. Once a day a horn sounded, and it was immediately followed by an explosion in the quarry.

The Bertrand son who was the station master had cows in the back of his property. One day my mother gave me the milk can and told me, "Go to a farmer in Virolet and get some milk for the girls." I went to the station master's house, which was the first house over the railroad tracks. There were cows in the back of the house. I saw his wife, Madame Bertrand, and I asked her if I could buy some milk from her cows for my sisters. She said yes and I offered her the milk can. She said, "Don't give me the milk can. The cows are in the back there. Go get the milk yourself." I told her that I had never milked a cow before. She said, "Go over there, you'll figure it out." I walked over to a cow and Madame Bertrand followed me. She told me to take a stool and milk the cow. While she watched over me I finally figured out how to milk the cow. From then on, every time we needed milk, I went over there with our milk can and milked a cow.

I admired the Boileau's garden and I watched them tend it. We had a piece of land on the side of our house, and I decided that we should have a beautiful garden too. In the spring of 1941, which was our second spring in Virolet, I borrowed gardening tools from Madame Boileau and I turned over the soil and prepared my garden. I planted lettuce, beans, radishes and some flowers, and they grew pretty well.

Bertrand, the station master, owned a field next to the Moulin where he grew potatoes every year. He used a machine to harvest the potatoes, but the machine could not pick them all up and there were always some potatoes left in the field. I asked him for permission to dig up the potatoes that were left in the field, and he always gave me permission to do that. Nathan and I went out into the field and filled up a few sacks with potatoes. It was easy enough to do, because the harvester machine had already loosened the soil.

I used to walk in the woods in the summer with Emile Boileau, the miller's son. He once told me that his family had never met a Jew before, and that my family were the first Jews that his family had ever

met. Emile was looking for beehives in the woods. Some of the trees had hollows in them and there were bees inside. Emile used his ax to mark the tree with an “X” on the bottom. In the winter, we came back to the trees that had been marked. The honey bees had clustered for the winter and they were not active, so it was safe to approach the hive. Emile climbed up the tree with his ax and chopped the hollow open wider and then he removed the wax honey comb with all of the honey inside. Emile let me taste the honey, but he took most of it for himself. Emile told me about a farm that was close to our house that had beehives and sold honey. He also told me about the teenage girl that lived and worked on the farm. Her father was indebted to the farmer and he could not pay the farmer back. His daughter was working on the farm to pay off her father’s debt to the farmer. The farm was on the west side of the fish pond, down a dirt road from the Moulin. Mother gave me some money and jars and I went to that farm to buy honey.

We had an interesting neighbor in Virolet, Monsieur Roland Petit, who was a retired military officer. He owned two of the nicest homes in Virolet. He leased one of those homes to my friend from Metz, Joseph Russak. Joseph lived there with his parents and with his older sister. Joseph had an aunt and uncle, also displaced from Metz, who lived in another house in Virolet with their son and one or two daughters. Monsieur Petit had fruit orchards where he grew many varieties of pears. He also had some apple trees and grape vines. He stored the fruit in the attic of his house which was located on the main street. The grapes were hanging from the rafters, and the pears were sitting side-by-side on a table. The pears didn’t touch each other, and they lasted all winter. Sometimes I asked mother for a few centimes, and on the way to school Nathan and I went to Monsieur Petit and treated ourselves to pears or to some grapes. Monsieur Petit had pears and grapes available at any time of the year. Somehow, even without refrigeration, he had a knack for preserving the fruits. The grapes had dried up a little bit, but they still tasted pretty good. Monsieur Petit also had an extensive and magnificent garden. He grew beautiful things, including strawberries and lettuce.

The grape harvest in early fall in France was known as Le Vendange. Monsieur Bertrand, the station master, also had vineyards and he made wine. Nathan and I and the other kids from school helped with the grape harvest. School was delayed for a few days until all of the grapes were picked off the vines. We all had pocket knives that we used to cut the grapes, and then put them in horse drawn wagons. The grapes

were taken to a big barn alongside the railroad where Monsieur Bertrand pressed the grapes and put the juice into barrels. Everybody pitched in and helped with the whole process. Nathan and I decided that we would try to make our own wine. We got some grapes and stuffed them into bottles. After a few weeks we tasted it. Each of us got a bad case of diarrhea from that experiment which didn't stop for days.

The school kids also helped the farmers in the potato fields. The leaves of the potato plants became infested with insects that fed on the leaves. The insects laid eggs underneath the leaves. We were given liter wine bottles and we picked the insects from the leaves and put them into the bottles and then corked the bottles. We also snapped off the potato leaves that had eggs on them, and then we folded the leaves and crushed the eggs. This process took a few days. We didn't get paid for the work that we did to help the farmers. I suppose that it was all just a part of living in an agricultural community and helping out our neighbors.

Because we were refugees, either the government or a Jewish relief agency paid us a stipend every month to help us survive. There were no food stores or any other types of retail shops in Virolet. We had to walk to Ligugé, Croutelle or Poitiers to purchase food and other goods. There was a bakery in Croutelle and in Ligugé, and Jacques used to walk there to buy bread. At first kosher meat was available in Poitiers, but that didn't last very long. Father used to go to Poitiers and bring back kosher meat, but the butcher eventually closed. Father and Mother went to see a Rabbi in Poitiers to ask him what they should do without any kosher meat available. The Rabbi told them, "Do what you have to do to survive. When the war is over, you go back to kashrut." Father knew a Schoichet in Poitiers. Father told the Jewish families in Virolet and in the surroundings of Ligugé that if they wanted, he would bring the Schoichet to our house. He said that they could bring their chickens over and, for a small fee, the Shoichet ritually slaughtered the chickens so they were kosher. Occasionally, and for a short while after we arrived in Virolet, Father brought the Shoichet over on his bicycle and he slaughtered the chickens in a roofless and dilapidated building near the Moulin.

Once, Mother took me shopping with her to the city of Poitiers. We walked there and back. She needed something from the supermarket. The store had a big counter with food stuffs, and there was a bin with olives. I was looking, and I told her, "You know, I never ate an olive." So she bought some green olives and said, "Here, have it." That was the first time that I ate an olive, and it was good. Our trip to Poitiers that day



was the exception. Mother didn't go out shopping very often. My sisters were little and they needed to be cared for, so she stayed home. I think that Jacques did most of the shopping.

I used to find eggs in the bushes around our house. There were many stray chickens in the neighborhood -- most of them belonged to Madame Boileau -- and they laid eggs everywhere. I gathered some of the stray eggs when I spotted them in the bushes, and before the rodents got to them. I also purchased eggs from Madame Boileau and from Madame Bertrand, the station master's wife.

I was walking in the fields with Jean Bertrand one day and he said to me, "Come on, I want to show you something." He added, "You're going to be very interested." We walked through a field, about 200 yards in from the secondary road, and there was a patch of high grass. He moved the grass out of the way and revealed a big plaque proclaiming that Charles Martel -- Charlemagne's grandfather -- defeated the Moors in that area. It is believed that the Battle of Tours, also known as the Battle of Poitiers, was fought in an area between the cities of Poitiers and Tours in 732 A.D. Some historians think that the Battle halted the Moors' advance into Western Europe, but other historians disagree with that assessment. While historians can debate the significance of that ancient battle, it is not open to dispute that, 1,200 years later, I saw soldiers from other armies on those fields near Virolet.



Virolet, France 2012  
Szklarz/Rychner home  
at the Moulin de la Reinière



Virolet, France 2012  
Moulin de la Reinière to the left  
Fish pond top center





Virolet, France about 1940  
Szklarz family  
Jacques holding Annette and Paulette  
Nathan standing to the right  
Cecile and Jean to her right

Photo courtesy of Max Knecht



Virolet, France 2012  
 School teacher's residence  
 School room in the rear yard



Ligugé, France 2012  
 School that Jean Szklarz attended





Jean Szklarz  
Primary School Diploma



Virolet, France 2012  
Bertrand Hotel



## *CHAPTER III*

### *THE REIGN OF TERROR*

#### *A. SOLDIERS*

Refugees continued to head south on the Route Nationale. If they were driving in a car and it ran out of gas, they abandoned the car, pushed it off the highway with everything inside, and started walking south.

I was standing in front of the Moulin and talking with Madame Boileau, Emile, Janette and Nathan. Madame Boileau said, "Somebody is walking across the field in front of us over there." We looked to the left, and in the distance we spotted a soldier with bags walking towards us. It was Monsieur Boileau, the miller, dressed in his military uniform and wearing and carrying all of his equipment. Madame Boileau and her children got all excited and they asked him, "Where did you come from?" He answered, "I was on the train. Everybody's going home. Nothing's happening. The train was passing through Virolet and I jumped off." He was able to jump from the train because in that area there was a big hill and the trains slowed down a lot while the locomotives strained to pull the cars up the hill. Monsieur Boileau walked into his house at the Moulin in his uniform, and he soon returned outside wearing his civilian clothing, his uniform folded and packed neatly away in the armoire in the big room downstairs. I should have realized right then and there that France was doomed.

Monsieur Boileau was a big smoker and he drank a lot of wine. I saw him eat his breakfast. He took his pocket knife and cut off a big piece of lard, put it on a slice of bread, and then he downed the combination with a glass of wine. That was his breakfast. As soon as he returned to Virolet he went back to work in the Moulin with his son, Emile. He also went back to feeding the carp in the fish pond, which was another one of his jobs. It was hard work. The mill had two huge stones,

each one about 5 or 6 feet in diameter, and they had grooves in them. One stone was stationary and the other stone turned. As the stone turned the milled grains were forced into the grooves and eventually spilled out. The Moulin ran all day long. The farmers came one after another and brought their grain on horse and ox drawn wagons. Monsieur Boileau kept a percentage of the milled grain as payment, then he sold it. After months of spinning, the grooves in the stones wore out. Monsieur Boileau and Emile took the mechanism apart and with block and tackle they lifted the stones and laid them down. Then, with a chisel and a hammer, they deepened the worn-out grooves. It took a couple of weeks to complete that process. All of the work was done without any power tools.

The first shots of war that I heard fired in Virolet came from low-flying Italian air force planes. You could see the Italian markings on the planes. They fired their machine guns at the highway near the school. Some of the bullets shot up a part of the wall in the schoolyard. The following day, Nathan and I were helping Madame Boileau with some hay. The Italian planes came back and, for some reason, they started shooting at the field. We ran into a barn and laid down against a wall until the planes left. About an hour later, a French military aircraft flew around the area and then left. The same day I heard Monsieur Bertrand, the station master, say that he got a phone call from Poitiers telling him that the Italian planes bombed and strafed a train filled with refugees in the Poitiers railroad station. Numerous refugees were killed or wounded.

After the strafing incidents Nathan and I were walking to school and we spotted a detachment of about eight to ten French soldiers. They were digging shallow trenches and setting up machine guns along both sides of the highway. I asked one of the soldiers what was going on. He said, "When the Germans come here, we're going to fight." We saw convertible cars that were the staff cars used by the French officers. The officers were in the Bertrands' restaurant. When we went home after school we saw a big gasoline tanker truck on the side of the highway. The soldiers were pouring the gasoline out into the gutter alongside the road. The soldiers then took the truck and parked it in the woods a few hundred feet from the highway. They were also dismantling the machine gun positions that they had set-up earlier in the day. I asked one of the soldiers, "What's going on here? Are you guys leaving?" He told me, "The officers left us, so we're leaving. We're not staying here by ourselves." They also said that the Germans were close.

A day or so after the French soldiers left Virolet with their

machine guns, I heard singing coming from the south on the highway. I could tell that they were not singing in French. I was standing alongside the highway with Jean Bertrand and, sure enough, German officers and soldiers were approaching Virolet on foot and on horseback, and they had horses pulling wagons. They were not mechanized and they didn't have cars or trucks. The soldiers were singing and they were happy. That was the first time that I saw soldiers and officers in German uniforms.

Germany invaded France on May 10, 1940. The German forces circumvented and blitzkrieged the Maginot Line of defense that Uncle Aron had helped to paint. Six weeks later, on June 22, 1940, France surrendered to Germany and signed an armistice in the same railway car in which Germany had surrendered to France in 1918 to end World War I. Alsace-Lorraine, including Metz, was annexed and became part of Germany once again. One-hundred and fifty years after the French Revolution, France was defeated and occupied by a foreign enemy. A second Reign of Terror soon enveloped the nation.

The soldiers were wearing German uniforms, but they were not singing in German and they were not Germans. They were singing and talking in what sounded like a Slavic language. Coming from Metz, I understood some German. The officers were speaking in German and they were definitely Germans. There were a lot of soldiers. Jean Bertrand went over to one of the soldiers and he asked him, "Cigarette, pour mon père?" The soldier took out a cigarette and gave it to Jean. I asked the soldier, "Can I have one, too?" He took out another cigarette and handed it to me. It was an oval Turkish cigarette. I had never smoked a cigarette before. I gave it to Jean and he smoked both of them. I noticed the large metal belt buckles that the soldiers were wearing. They were decorated with a swastika surrounded by the words "Gott mit uns" ("God with us").

When nightfall came, one detachment of soldiers decided to bivouac in Virolet. They came around to the Moulin and took over some of the empty barns for their horses. Soldiers brought in hay for the horses. The soldiers stayed in the hotel by the railroad tracks. They were downstairs in the bar and in the dining room, and they drank all night. The next morning, some of the officers came back to the Moulin to get their horses and they noticed the fish pond behind the Moulin. They went out on the pond in Monsieur Boileau's little boat. They took out their Luger pistols and started shooting at the carp in the pond. They couldn't hit any of the fish with their bullets. They yelled to a soldier on shore, "Go get some hand grenades." The soldier got some hand grenades and

gave them to the officers. They rowed out to the middle of the pond to a deep spot where the water was clear and they threw the hand grenades into the water. The concussions from the exploding grenades killed the fish and the dead fish floated to the surface where they were gathered by the German officers.

Nathan and I went by the Bertrand hotel later that morning. The place was full of drunken soldiers, and some of them were still drinking. I watched them balancing tables by placing a table leg in their mouths. They were singing, “Oh, bon yitzi.” I didn’t know what that meant, but I knew that it was not German. The soldiers left later that day. They started walking north on the road to Poitiers. There was a contingent of Germans in Ligugé. About a mile outside of Ligugé there was a big fancy castle and the Germans occupied it.

## **B. VICHY**

The German soldiers just passed through Virolet, but life for my family and for all of the Jewish people in France changed for the worse. I heard my parents and other people talking about the German occupation, and I saw that everybody was sad and scared. We knew that trouble was coming. We had listened to Hitler’s hateful speeches on the radio when we lived in Metz. I was eleven years old. I watched Mother and Aunt Chaya cry all of the time. I knew that things were bad, but I never realized, and I didn’t even think, that they were going to be killing Jews all over France. I thought that maybe they would arrest you and put you in a camp and hold you, but I didn’t know and I never accepted the idea that people were going to be murdered.

After France surrendered, Madame Frapier showed us a map in school. The map depicted a demarcation line that was drawn across France. The northern part of France was going to be occupied by Germany, and the southern part of France was going to be called L’État, the State of France, which was also known by the misnomer, “Free France.” The demarcation line was like a border, and you had to present identity papers to be able to pass through it. The new frontier was southeast of Poitiers, between Poitiers and the cities of Angoulême and Limoges, which were located south of Poitiers. Poitiers and Virolet were slightly to the north of the demarcation line in the occupied zone. Angoulême and Limoges were to the south of the demarcation line in the “free” zone. “Free France” was going to be governed from the city of

Vichy by Marshal Phillipe Pétain. Léon Blum, a Jew who was the Prime Minister of France before the war started, opposed Pétain and the Vichy government. He was arrested and imprisoned. As a French schoolboy, I knew that Pétain was regarded as a hero of France during World War I. He supposedly won that war, and he was looked upon as a great patriot. But in the intervening years, Pétain had become pro-German, and the Germans installed him and his fascist cronies, who were also German sympathizers, as the titular rulers of Free France.

It became unlawful to possess guns and explosives. I got scared because we had that Napoleonic armory in our attic. I took all of the antique guns and swords and threw them into the fish pond. We no longer heard any explosions from the Boileaus' stone quarry.

A system to ration food and clothing was implemented. Ration books containing stamps were issued, and the stamps had to be cut out of the books and then presented to the merchant to purchase specified quantities of certain food, including staples like bread, butter and sugar. Each item was carefully weighed out to the specified amount of grams, nothing more. Clothing and shoes were also rationed. Food was easier to obtain where we lived because we were surrounded by farms. You could always barter with the farmers for chickens, eggs, lettuce and tomatoes.

The Boileaus ate well. They slaughtered and butchered a big hog once a year. They salted and jarred pieces of pork, and they hung up hams to cure together with big slabs of pork bellies. I watched Madame Boileau cook the hog's blood and make sausages. I had never eaten pork before, but she said, "Taste it, taste it, it's good." I tasted it, and it wasn't bad with all of the spices that she mixed in. The Boileaus also had rabbits, chickens and pigeons, which they also ate.

Although food staples and clothing were rationed, the power stayed on and the post office was open for business. Gasoline remained generally unavailable. Some people improvised and ran their cars and trucks with syngas that they produced by burning wood or charcoal in a gasifier device that was attached to the vehicle. The fumes collected in a big tank on the vehicle and then ran into the engine, in place of gasoline, to power it. The engine had to be cleaned frequently, but it worked. As the war went on, shortages increased. Chocolate, sugar and jams disappeared. Wool and cotton clothing also disappeared, and they were replaced by clothing made out of synthetic fibers. Cane sugar was replaced with beet sugar. A lot of the farmers planted fields with sugar



beets. It didn't taste like cane sugar, but it wasn't that bad. Wheat was available but it was in short supply because the Germans were taking most of the wheat. People started blending corn with the wheat flour, but the bakeries never mastered the art of baking with corn. In France, before the war, corn was used for animal feed and it was not eaten by people. I noticed that sometimes the Moulin was running late at night. I asked Emile Boileau, "Well, what are you doing?" He explained that some of the farmers wanted to have bread and they brought bags of wheat that they had hidden to be milled into flour, which was against the law during the occupation. The farmers baked huge round loaves of bread which seemed to last forever. If the bread got hard, you grilled it. Cheese was always available for cash. Every farmer had cows and goats and they made their own cheese. The taste of the cheese varied from farm to farm, but all of the cheeses were good.

We learned that Cousin Joseph Rychner was in the French army and that he had been captured by the Germans and imprisoned in a prisoner of war camp in Germany. We made packages of food that Jacques took to the Red Cross in Poitiers to send to him in the POW camp.

### **C. *YOM KIPPUR 1941***

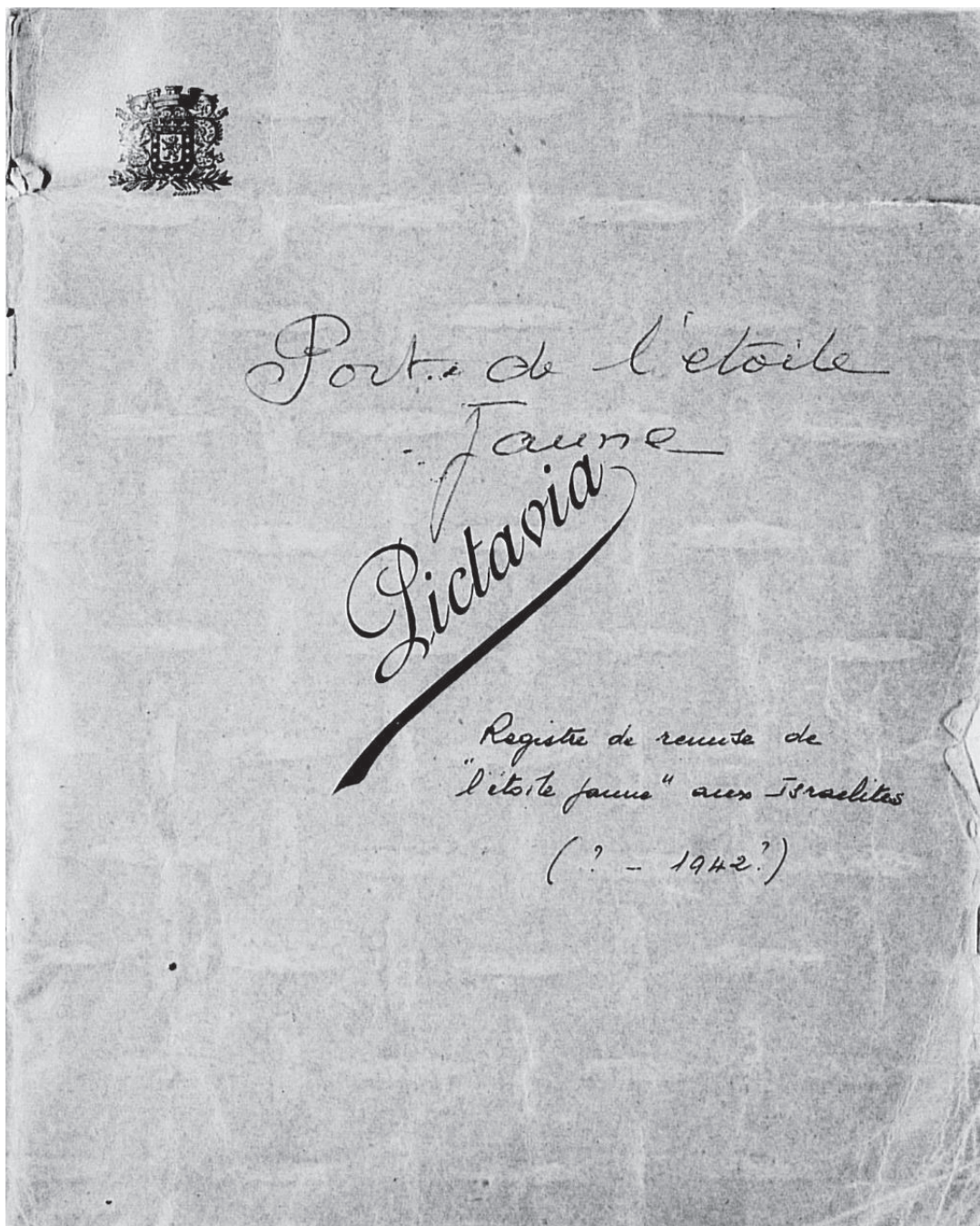
Charles Katz was six years old in 1940. He was the oldest son of Monsieur Benjamin Katz, the tailor from Metz. Charles attended school with Nathan and me in Virolet. The school was located on a hill that rose upwards towards the school from the railroad station. The Katz family lived in a house down the hill and on the other side of the highway. One of the Bertrand sons lived across the street. Monsieur Katz walked with Charles to school, but he allowed Charles to walk down the hill alongside the Route Nationale 10 towards his house when school was recessed for the day. That was in the same direction that Nathan and I walked home together every day. Monsieur Katz always waited on the other side of the street, and he told Charles when it was okay to cross the busy highway. Drivers used to speed down the Route Nationale, and a lot of German military cars and trucks used that road. Charles used to run on the sidewalk down the hill towards his father. One day Charles ran down the hill as usual. I could see Monsieur Katz waving and yelling at Charles, "Don't cross." Charles either didn't hear or he didn't listen to his father's pleading. A big convertible car with German officers inside was speeding down the hill. Nathan and I watched as the speeding staff car

hit and killed Charles as he ran across the street towards his father. We paused for a moment, stunned by what we had just witnessed. We then ran home to tell Mother what had happened.

Monsieur Katz, his wife Sarah, and their younger son Fred survived World War II. Fred Katz lives in London, England. I recently met him in England and spoke with him about the death of his older brother, Charles. Fred was an infant in a carriage at the time, but when he was older his father told him what happened when Charles was killed by the German staff car. One of the German officers got out of the staff car (the staff cars that I saw in France were all made by Mercedes Benz) and he approached Monsieur Katz. The German officer asked him for his name, and Monsieur Katz told him "Katz." The German officer then told the grieving father, who had just witnessed his son killed in front of him, "That's one less Jew."

Yom Kippur fell on October 1st in the year 1941. More than five years had passed since Grandfather Pierre died in the synagogue in Metz after putting on his tallis to pray. It was time to pray again, but in a France that was very different from the France of 1936.

The Germans and their Vichy collaborators implemented anti-Semitic laws. Jews lost their freedom of movement. Identity cards were stamped "Jew," and Jews were prohibited, under penalty of arrest, from traveling out of the area in which they were registered to live. Every Jew had to wear a yellow star with "Juif" written on it over his or her heart. Father went to the police station in Ligugé to pick up the yellow stars. The yellow stars were imprinted on long wide ribbons, and they asked how many people were in the family. Each person needed several stars for their articles of clothing, and each family was issued a length of ribbon with an appropriate number of yellow stars on it. The distribution of the yellow stars was recorded in a book called "Port de l'étoile Jaune," "Wearing of the Yellow Star." Father signed the book to acknowledge that he received the yellow stars, as did Uncle Aron and all of the other heads of the Jewish families in the community.<sup>3</sup> We were instructed that the yellow stars had to be neatly trimmed from the ribbon and then neatly sewn on the clothing and, if it was not done properly, you would be arrested. I watched Mother sew the yellow star on the jacket that I wore to school. I had to wear that jacket whenever I went out of the house, and when I went to school. There was a curfew for Jews and you could not be out on the streets after dark. Jews were prohibited from going to parks, museums, theatres and the movies.



Register, "Wearing of the Yellow Star"

Courtesy of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum



N <sup>o</sup> d'ordre	Noms et Prénoms	Domicile	Nationalité	Date et lieu naissance
X 14	- Goldmann Sophie	Ligue	Français	29-8-2
X 13	- Goldmann nie Goldmann Micha	d <sup>o</sup>	Belge	15-5-0
X 12	- Goldmann Joseph	d <sup>o</sup>	d <sup>o</sup>	23-11-
X 261	- Szklarz Nathan	Mirolet L <sup>me</sup> Ligue	apatride	12-11-32
X 259	- Szklarz Jacques	d <sup>o</sup>	d <sup>o</sup>	14-7-2
X 260	- Szklarz Jean	d <sup>o</sup>	d <sup>o</sup>	10-7-2
X 258	- Szklarz nie Zychma Cecile	d <sup>o</sup>	d <sup>o</sup>	19-7-1
X 257	- Szklarz Gratiel	d <sup>o</sup>	d <sup>o</sup>	8-9-
X 803	- Frank Françoise	d <sup>o</sup>	Française	11-3-
X 1038	- Barband Félicie	d <sup>o</sup>	d <sup>o</sup>	21-11-
X 961	- Helisiewicz nie Brand	Heuil	Colonaire	7-3-
X 960	- Helisiewicz Moraka	d <sup>o</sup>	d <sup>o</sup>	20-6-
X 959 bis	- Adler David	d <sup>o</sup>	Luxembourgeois	24-10
X 981	- Helisiewicz Jacqueline	d <sup>o</sup>	Française	1-1-

nom et prénom	nationalité	Date et lieu de naissance	Embarquement de la personne à qui les insignes ont été remis	observation
Ligué	français	29-8-28 à Metz	Goldmann	
d <sup>e</sup>	belonogorane	15-5-09 à Snigrool	Goldmann	
d <sup>e</sup>	d <sup>e</sup>	23-11-04 Ladomirov	Goldmann	
Robert Ligué	apatride	12-11-32 à Metz	Skluz	
d <sup>e</sup>	d <sup>e</sup>	14-7-39 à Metz	Skluz	
d <sup>e</sup>	d <sup>e</sup>	10-7-39 à Metz	Skluz	
d <sup>e</sup>	d <sup>e</sup>	19-7-01 à Schornice (Cologne)	Skluz	
d <sup>e</sup>	d <sup>e</sup>	8-9-02 à Friedler (Cologne)	Skluz	
d <sup>e</sup>	française	1-3-28 Nancy	Skluz	pas de point
d <sup>e</sup>	d <sup>e</sup>	21-11-27 Nancy	Skluz	- d <sup>e</sup>
Heul	colonaire	7-3-1912 Munchen	Hebner	
d <sup>e</sup>	d <sup>e</sup>	20-6-06 Niroka	Hebner	
d <sup>e</sup>	Luxembourgeois	24-10-17 Esch-Alzette	Hebner	
d <sup>e</sup>	française	1-1-36 Paris	Hebner	





Jewish Star from Ligugé, France

Courtesy of Fred Katz

Father's best friend from Metz, Monsieur Knecht, was living in Angoulême with his family. Angoulême was located south of the demarcation line in the "free" zone, sixty-three miles south of Virolet. It might just as well have been sixty-three light years away. Monsieur Knecht and Father corresponded, and Monsieur Knecht urged him to pack up everybody and come to live in Angoulême. Monsieur Knecht told Father that the Jews were pretty safe in Angoulême. He said that they knew the government people and the police, that they protected them there, and if Father came with his family then we would be okay, and we would be safe. But we could not get to Angoulême and the prospect of safe haven there. There was no gas for our car. Identity cards were checked on the train. There were road blocks set up on the main roads. The only way to get to Angoulême was to attempt to clandestinely cross over the demarcation line by walking through the woods and fields at night and avoiding the roads. Grandmother Celine was elderly, senile and totally blind and she could not make that journey, even if Father and Mother had decided to risk it with five children. It was physically impossible to get there.

Father spoke with the other Jews in and around Virolet about Yom Kippur. They agreed that they were going to hold a high holiday service in our house at the Moulin because it was in an isolated location. A day or two before Yom Kippur, Father rode his bicycle to Poitiers with a wicker basket that was used to carry baguettes strapped to his back and returned to Virolet on his bicycle later that day. Someone in Poitiers loaned him a Torah to use for the Yom Kippur service. He hid the Torah in the bottom of the wicker basket. He camouflaged the scroll with some baguettes that he cut up and put on top of the scroll, protruding from the basket. The morning of Yom Kippur, we emptied all of the furniture in our house, from the rooms both upstairs and downstairs, and put it outside in the yard. Jews from the area, from Virolet and from Ligugé, including my friend from Metz, Joseph Russak and his family, congregated at our house. Our house at the Moulin became an impromptu synagogue. The congregants brought their prayer books to the service. They had taken those prayer books with them when they evacuated their homes all over France. There was no room for the children, so we were outside. I could hear from the yard that the adults were praying and crying and screaming inside the house. It was a horror scene and it was heartbreaking. It was as if they knew the fate that awaited them. I was twelve years old, and my bar mitzvah was supposed to be in nine months.

## D. *CAMP DE LA ROUTE DE LIMOGES*

The Spanish Civil War also created a refugee crisis before the start of World War II. Spanish Republicans fleeing the fascists found their way into France. Internment camps were set up throughout France and the refugees were arrested and then placed in those camps. There was an internment camp near Virolet that was located on the outskirts of Poitiers on the road to the city of Limoges, and it was called Camp de la route de Limoges. My parents, and all of the Jews in our community, were talking about that Camp. They said that Jews, including parents and children, were being arrested and interned there. The authorities decided that they would release children if the children had somewhere to go. Father and other Jewish families from Virolet went to the Camp to take children out of there. Father brought home two teenage sisters to stay with our family. Their names were Francoise Frank, born on March 4, 1928, and Felicie Barbanel, born November 21, 1927.<sup>4</sup> Like my family, they were from Alsace-Lorraine. They stayed with us for a few weeks, but they were not happy. The accommodations were not great, with fifteen people crammed into that small house, the seven Szklarzs and Grandmother Celine upstairs, and the eight Rychners and Ellerts downstairs. The girls had younger sisters who had been taken in by families in Ligugé. Eventually, the girls made other arrangements and they went to live with another family in Ligugé.

I heard Mother, Uncle Aron and Aunt Chaya talking about the state of affairs. Speaking in Yiddish, they said, “zey nito mord idn, zey nito mord idn,” which meant, “they’re killing Jews, they’re killing Jews.”

When my family first arrived in Virolet, Mother and Father had to go to Ligugé to register at the Prefecture that they were now living in Virolet. They were immigrants from Poland and they were not French citizens under French law. Between 1940 and 1941 Mother and Father applied for French citizenship for themselves, and for me, Nathan, Paulette and Annette as the French-born children of foreigners. Jacques didn’t go with us; I think that because he was older he had already obtained French citizenship. We went to Ligugé to have physical exams that were required for the citizenship applications. I remember the doctor; his name was Dr. Bercovici [phonetic]. All of the citizenship papers were filled out and filed, but nothing ever became of them.

There was a person in the canton that included Virolet and Ligugé who was known as the Game Warden, “le Garde Champêtre.” I never

spoke to him, but I used to see him. His job was to catch poachers. It was common for people to set traps to catch rabbits, but it was illegal to do that in the woods that were private property. The poachers strung wires with a copper wire noose tied-in. They set the traps on paths that were worn by the rabbits, and at the height that the rabbits ran along those paths. The Game Warden knew the area and he knew where all the houses were and where everybody lived. Jacques told me that the Game Warden was given another job during the occupation. While our citizenship papers were sitting in a government office in Ligugé, the Game Warden came around to our house to take a census. He had a list and he asked where our family came from, what were our nationalities, and what was our religion. My parents told him the truth; they told him that we were Jewish. All of our names, dates and places of birth, nationalities, professions, domicile and religion were carefully handwritten in a book that was maintained by the Prefecture de la Vienne called the “Rencensement Juife,” the “Jewish Census.”<sup>5</sup> The handwritten census was soon turned into typewritten lists that were used to deport and murder the Jewish community in the Vienne.<sup>6</sup>



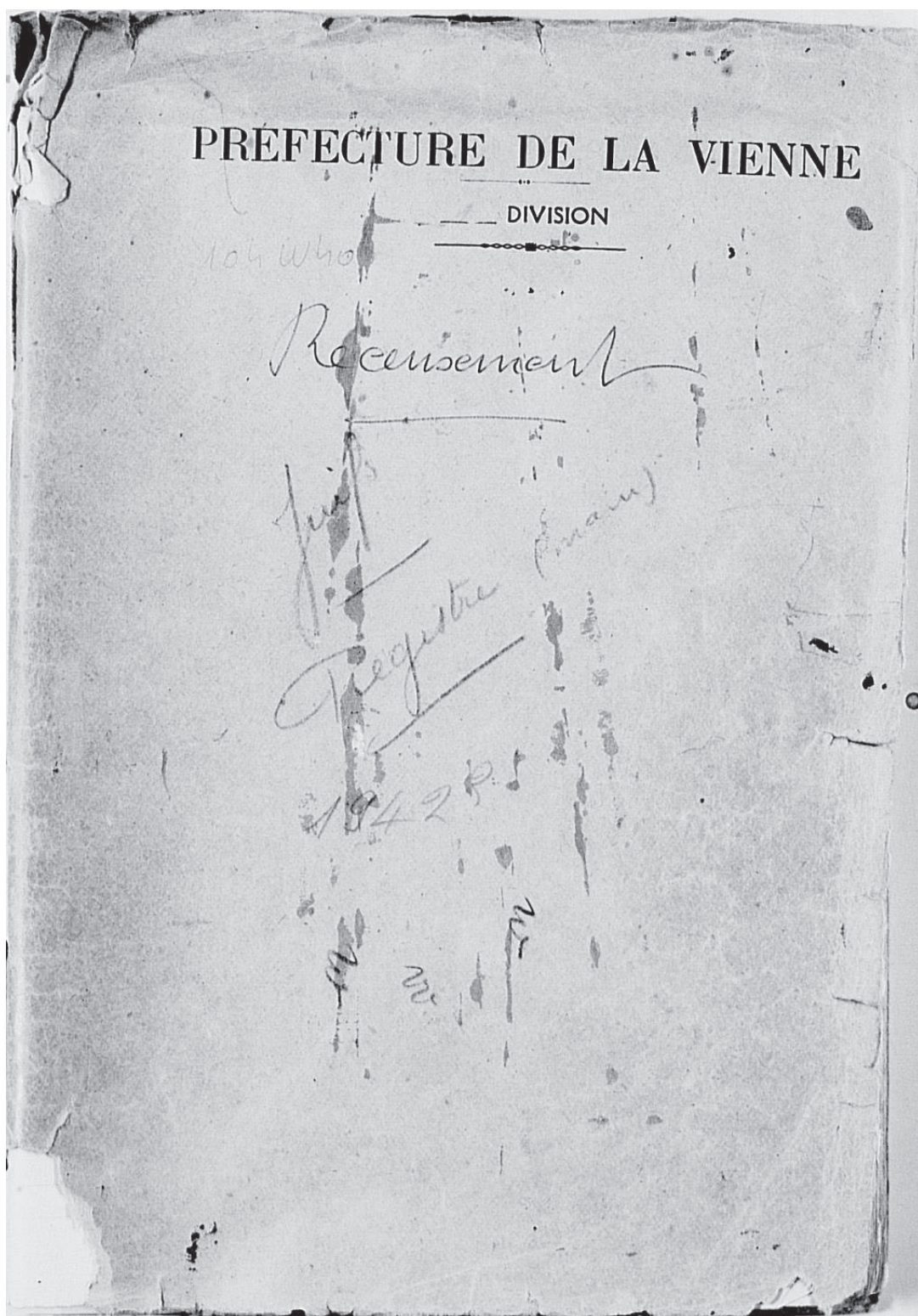


Bordeaux, France  
Exhibition on “The Jew and France”



Poitiers, France  
Scene in the Camp de la Route de Limoges

From the archives of the YIVO Institute  
For Jewish Research, New York



Jewish Census

Courtesy of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum



	Noms	Prénoms	Date de naissance	Lieu de naissance
256	1 <sup>re</sup> Braun née Hoffe	Leenie	24.7.58 f	Selle
257	Szklaov m.	Weraitel	8.9.02. h	Fiedler
258	Szklaov née Rychner m.	Cecil	19.7.01 f	Polnowice
259	Szklaov el	Jacques	14.7.25 h	Ketz
260	Szklaov	Jean	10.7.29 e	do
261	Szklaov	Nathan	12.4.32 e	do
262	Szklaov	Annette	9.4.38 e	do
263	Szklaov	Paulette	9.4.38 e	do
264	Rychner née Schindler v <sup>re</sup>	Zisla	1885. f	Zerki
265	Rozencwajg el	Bereš	8.9.19. h	Łomazow
266	Rozencwajg m.	Joel	20.5.93. h	do
267	Rozencwajg m. née Symkewicz	Golda	2.3.93 f	Skiermierz
268	Rozencwajg <del>comp</del>	Kateka	18.4.21 f	Łomazow
269	Rozencwajg el	Lea	18.4.29 e	do
270	Hanau <sup>personnes</sup>	Joseph	24.11.92 h	Furweiler
271	Hanau m. née Samuel autre fille n° 435	Cécile	4.12.95 f	Brotdorf
272	Hanau el	Saure	5.3.25 f	Billing
	5 hommes 2 h	7 femmes 4 f	5 enfants 1	

	Nationalité	N° de la carte	Profession	Domicile actuel	Donné par le interne ou externe en France	Religion	Situation
f	français	4686	sans	10 R Zola Poitiers	Soie	naiss	Cerf Moïse Fanny May
5 m	sans	0013	chauffeur	Leipzig	1922	4	Henri Szklarz Lara Licia
5 f	Polonaise	40AP06208	sans	1 do	1922	4	Pierre Ryckner Edme Zygmuntowicz
m	français		sans	1 do	naiss	4	Gratias Szklarz Cécile Ryckner
m	do		sans	1 do	do	4	do
m	do		sans	1 do	do	4	do
f	do		sans	1 do	do	4	do
f	do		sans	1 do	do	4	do
f	Polonaise	40AP06209	sans	2 rue J. Ma do	1922	4	Brandla Schinder Jacques Schinder
m	français	3032	mécanicien	15 R. Lucci Poitiers	1922	4	José Rozencwajg Golda Zygmuntowicz
2 m	Polonaise	0001	chauffeur	1 do	1922	4	Emmanuel Rozencwajg Yaffa Zacharow
2 f	do	0013	sans	1 do	1922	4	Michel Zygmuntowicz et Eliac.
f	do	0010	sans	1 do	1929	4	José Rozencwajg Golda Zygmuntowicz
f	do		sans	1 do	naiss	4	do
3 m	français	60765	commerçant	Prison Fresnes Paris <del>Le Mans</del> R. Guillaumont	1934	4	Samuel Hanau Berthe Levy
3 f	d	1073	sans	do	1934	4	Abraham Samuel Golda Herz
f	d		do	do	1934	4	Joseph Hanau Cécile Samuel

10 f. 1934  
6 Polonaise  
1 sans  
13



PRÉFECTURE  
DE LA VIENNE

1<sup>re</sup> DIVISION  
2<sup>e</sup> Bureau

AFFAIRES JUIVES

N<sup>o</sup> 260

*enfant*  
Szklarz Jean

FICHE

Nom : Szklarz J  
Prénoms : Jean  
Sexe : masculin  
Né le : 10 juillet 1929 à Metz Moselle  
(Département au Pays)  
de Erastel Szklarz  
et de Cécile Rychnier  
Adresse : Ligue  
Nationalité : française  
Profession : sans  
N<sup>o</sup> de la Carte d'identité :  
Confession religieuse : israélite  
Date d'entrée en France : depuis naissance  
~~Marié~~ - Célibataire - ~~Veu~~ - ~~Diversé~~  
(Rayer les mentions inutiles)  
Nom de famille et prénoms du conjoint :  
Est-il juif ?  
Nombre d'enfants :  
Age :  
Sont-ils juifs ?

Jean Szklarz  
Registration Card

Courtesy of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

## CHAPTER IV

### “AUF MACHEN”

There was a structure attached to one side of our house at the Moulin, the side that was the farthest away from the road. It had a roof, but the face was open to the front yard. We used to store things in there, including wood for the stove. I decided to bury a metal box of trinkets -- I do not remember what they were -- in a corner of the storage area that was closest to the house. I figured that, if we ever had to leave our house, I would return after the war and retrieve my box of trinkets.

Father had his own hiding place. He called Jacques and me together and we walked towards the three barns that were located across the dirt road from our house. We went into one of the barns. The roof had caved in and the barn was in ruins. Father brought a box with him. We walked into the ruined barn and over to the left corner. Father told us, “Here, I have some rolled coins in here. Whatever happens, I don’t know what’s going to happen in the future, but if you need to, whenever, you can always find some coins to help yourselves.” Father dug a hole, maybe six inches deep, and he buried the box of coins, which were called “Gold Louis’,” in the hole and placed some stones on top.

Cousin David used to walk to Poitiers every day. One day, in the year 1942, he walked to Poitiers, and he never came back. He was arrested and put into the Camp de la route de Limoges. Uncle Aron and Aunt Chaya were crying. More and more Jews were being arrested. From what I heard, many of the arrests were of people trying to flee across the demarcation line into the free zone. If they went by train, by bus, or if they tried to escape by walking on the roads, they were stopped by the French police and asked for their identity cards, which were stamped “Jew.” Then they were arrested.

I turned 13 years old on July 10, 1942. It was impossible to have

a bar mitzvah because of the anti-Semitic laws of occupied France. Six days later, on July 16, 1942, which was two days after Jacques' 17<sup>th</sup> birthday, they came to our house at the Moulin in the middle of the night.<sup>7</sup> We were awakened around one o'clock in the morning by pounding on the door and shouts in German of "Auf Machen," which meant, "Open the door." We opened the door and a young German officer with two German soldiers, each one holding a Mauser rifle in his hands, came upstairs to our apartment. Outside, there were more German soldiers and some French police in blue uniforms standing around a waiting truck with a canvass roof that had backed-up to within five feet of the front door to our house. The German officer told Father, "Get dressed, we're taking you away. Pack a lot of warm clothes, where you're going to, it's going to be cold there." The German officer continued to talk with Father. While they were talking, Father was giving the officer things --I didn't see what they were -- and the officer was stuffing the two side-pockets of his coat with them. I was about three feet away, and I was shivering from fright. Mother, Jacques, Nathan, Paulette and Annette also watched, stunned and in terrified silence. The German soldiers escorted Father downstairs and outside onto the truck. I watched as the truck pulled away from the Moulin de la Reinière and headed on its way to another stop on its heinous route that evening. I never saw Father again.

Father had immigrated to France from Poland to escape persecution and to make a better life for himself, and to raise a family. He had volunteered to join the French Army to fight the Germans. He was willing to give his life fighting as a soldier for France even though he had a wife and five children at home, and even though he was not a French citizen. He was going to fight to save his family, and his adopted country. In France, all Father ever did was work hard to support and to raise his family in the nation whose inviting motto was, "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity." Even though Father was not a religious man, he risked his life for the displaced Jewish community by traveling to Poitiers on his bicycle to bring back a Torah scroll for the community's final Yom Kippur service. Now, treated like a criminal and accompanied by the French police who were supposed to protect us, but who instead were collaborating with the German invaders, Father began a forced journey back to Poland where he would be murdered because he was a Jew.

I must have gone into shock. I have no memory of what happened to Uncle Aron, Aunt Chaya, Cousin Sarah, Cousin Esther and



her husband, Bernard, and their children, Cousins Norbert and Georgette. At some point I realized that they were gone, and their apartment downstairs was empty. I didn't see them arrested the night that Father was taken from us. I have a vague memory that Jacques told me that they attempted to escape across the demarcation line and they were arrested. We soon learned that many of the male heads of all of the Jewish households were arrested, including Joseph Russak's father. A week or so before Father was arrested, Monsieur Katz and his family disappeared from Virolet. We didn't know at that time where they went. I learned later that Father was arrested during the nationwide round-up of Jews in July 1942 that filled the Vélodrome d'Hive sports area in Paris with thousands of Jews from the Capital Region.

Mother became very sickly and depressed after Father was arrested. Nathan and I were angry. I had heard stories and read articles in the newspapers about the killings, bombings and damage done by the Maquis, who were groups of French Resistance fighters and saboteurs. The railroad track was close to the Moulin, about 200 yards away. We knew that military trains used to run on that track. I suggested to Nathan that we go and try to sabotage the track. We walked over to the track and tried to back off some of the bolts that held the track down, but it was too hard and we couldn't do it. We decided to try something else. There was also a railroad siding where one train pulled over to let another train pass on the single track that headed north and south. The railroad traffic signals were carried in wires that ran along the track about two feet off the ground. We grabbed the signal wires and pulled on them and sat on them to stretch them out. We figured that by stretching the signal wires we would damage them and mix up the signals which would cause the trains to collide on the main track because one of the trains would not receive the signal to divert on to the siding. We were careful not to break the wires. The German military trains had a flat car that was pushed in front of the locomotive with soldiers who used binoculars to inspect the right of way as the train advanced down the tracks. They were looking for bombs and damage to the tracks. If they spotted something wrong, the train would stop and they would repair the track. Our second attempt to become saboteurs also failed, but we didn't give up. One day, Nathan and I were walking on the side of the Boileaus' stone quarry. I had a walking stick and I was poking the ground. By chance my stick struck something hard. We dug it up and found a box. Inside of the box were detonators for the explosives that were used at the quarry before the



possession and use of explosives was prohibited. I said to Nathan, “Maybe we can use the detonators to blow up some trucks or something.” We decided to try an experiment. We built a fire and put a detonator into the fire. We took cover behind a small hill. Nothing happened, and we stood up. As we stood up the detonator exploded and the concussion knocked both of us backwards. We put the box of detonators back where we found it. We believed that if we tried to blow up something, then the Germans would come and shoot everybody in the neighborhood.

Yom Kippur was on September 21 in the year 1942. Most of the Jewish men were gone. The Germans and the French police returned to our house on October 9, 1942, three months after Father was arrested. Once again we were awakened in the middle of the night by pounding on the door and shouts in German of “Auf Machen,” “Open the door.” The same horrific scene repeated itself. This time, another young German officer and his armed soldiers came upstairs to our apartment and they arrested Mother, Grandmother Celine, Paulette and Annette. They told Mother, “Get dressed and take clothes with you.” It was quiet. We were terrified. I walked down the stairs and outside to say goodbye as Mother, Grandmother and my sisters were put on the truck. It was an open truck with benches on the sides. There were about four German soldiers and about four French policemen in blue uniforms. All of them were armed with rifles. They were sent to arrest defenseless women and children. Paulette and Annette were 4 ½ years old. Grandmother Celine was elderly, blind and senile. She was screaming in Yiddish as they escorted her with rifles and shoved her on to the truck. Jacques, Nathan and I watched in a daze as the truck drove away. I didn’t know at that time why we were not arrested. The truck’s destination was the notorious Camp de la route de Limoges in Poitiers.<sup>8</sup>

Seventy-five years after Mother, Grandmother Celine, Paulette and Annette were arrested, I solved the mystery of the events of that horrible night. I found the arrest order in the archives of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. In simple but coldly sinister words, the Prefect of the Vienne issued this order to the police on October 8, 1942 (emphasis added):<sup>9</sup>

By order of the occupation authorities, you will immediately arrange for the arrest of the foreign Jews listed in the attached list and immediately transfer them to the Internment Camp on the Route de Limoges in Poitiers.

Elite and non-transportable persons will be temporarily left in their homes.

**Children born to foreign parents, but of French nationality, must not be arrested.** However, children under the age of 6, even of French nationality, whose parents are to be arrested, must be left with their parents and, consequently, will be taken with them to the Poitiers camp.

When he is arrested, the Jew can take only his cash, two blankets, two pairs of shoes, toiletries and utensils for food; it is strictly forbidden to bring anything other than these items strictly necessary.

The dwellings must be closed and provided with the German seal.

You will want to use for this purpose the bands and to make sure that the wax to seal penetrates well in the wood.

The keys of the houses and apartments of the arrested persons must be provided with a solid label, on which will be indicated the name, the commune, the street and the number.

These arrests must be made on the night of October 8th and at the latest on the 9th of October.

Attached are the required bands.

Unused bands should be returned as soon as possible.

On the other hand, you will want to reinforce the surveillance service of the Poitiers camp during the stay of the said Jews at the camp, which will not be of long duration, by adding 4 police officers.

You will have to send me an execution report in the

shortest possible time, with the list of people arrested.

I was the French-born child of foreign Jewish parents (born in Poland) and I was more than six years old. My parents did not flee their home as many other Jewish families did, and most who fled were arrested and deported as a result. Thirteen words in the order that condemned Mother to death spared my life.

## *CHAPTER V*

### *“SAVE THE CHILDREN”*

#### *A. THE PERMISSION SLIP*

Jacques went alone on his bicycle to the Camp de la route de Limoges to try to see Mother, Grandmother Celine, Paulette and Annette. Jacques told me what happened. He saw Mother, and she asked him to take Paulette and Annette out of the Camp. Jacques spoke to the French Commander of the Camp and he said that he could not release them. He said that the Germans arrested them, and he didn't have the authority to release them. Jacques asked him who had the authority to release the girls. The Commander told him that it was the Gestapo Chief in Poitiers and that Jacques needed to get his permission.

Jacques went to the headquarters of the S.D. of Poitiers [Sicherheitspolizei, the Security Police of the German SS]. He asked a guard outside to watch his bicycle. He went inside and asked for permission to see the S.D. Chief and they let him go upstairs to his office. Jacques knocked on the door and he heard the response, in French, “entrée.” Jacques took off his beret and he went into the office. The S.D. Chief said, “What do you want?” Jacques told him that his mother and sisters were arrested, and that he would like to remove his sisters from the Camp. He said that he spoke to the French Commander of the Camp, and that he told him that he needed the Chief's permission to release the girls. The S.D. Chief told Jacques, “I didn't arrest them. The French arrested them, I didn't.” Jacques repeated that the French Commander wanted the Chief's permission before he would release the girls from the Camp. The S.D. Chief offered Jacques a seat in his office. He asked Jacques where he lived, and what were the girls' names. There was a restaurant in the center of Poitiers, at the Place d'Armes, also known as le Place du Maréchal-Leclerc, called Café du Jet d'Eau. The S.D. Chief asked



Jacques to translate “Jet d’Eau” into German. As fate would have it at that moment, Jacques was from Metz and he was able to give the S.D. Chief a German translation of the name of the restaurant. The S.D. Chief then signed and gave Jacques a piece of paper with a swastika on it authorizing the release of Paulette and Annette from the Camp. Many years later, Jacques remembered the sequence of events slightly differently than he had originally related them to me, recalling instead that he went to the S.D. first, then to the French, then back to the S.D. Regardless of the sequence, Jacques could have been arrested and deported at any time during each of those perilous encounters. Jacques was just seventeen years old, and he risked his life to save our sisters, Paulette and Annette.

Jacques took the permission slip to the French Police in Poitiers. On October 14, 1942, at 2:52 p.m., the Intendent of Police gave Jacques this letter:<sup>10</sup>

To  
Monsieur le Directeur  
Du Camp d’Internment de la Route de Limoges  
Poitiers

The S.D. of Poitiers has just informed me that  
he authorized the Jew SZKLARZ to take his  
young sisters ANNETTE and PAULETTE.

These young children will be placed on the  
list that Mr. HIPPEL has established of French  
children who were released from the Camp, a list  
that the Jew WYROBEK has in her possession.

Jacques returned to Virolet with the letter. He got a cart that he hooked up to his bicycle. The next day, Jacques and I rode over to the Camp. Jacques pedaled the bicycle and I sat in the cart. Nathan stayed back at the house in Virolet. We arrived at the Camp and Jacques went to the gate and he gave the French guards the paper that the Gestapo Chief had signed. The Camp was surrounded by a wire fence, and there were barracks inside the fence with people milling around.

About one-half hour later, I saw Mother walking with Paulette and Annette towards the gate. When they arrived at the gate, Jacques took Paulette and Annette and put them into the cart. Mother yelled out in Yiddish, “Jacques, rateven di kinder,” which meant, “save the

children.” We said goodbye and left the Camp with our sisters. Mother followed us as far as she could along the wire fence. She yelled out again, “Rateven di kinder” “Save the children.” Those were the last words that I heard my beautiful and loving Mother speak. Her life had been devoted to caring for her family. She fed us, bathed us, washed our clothes, and she entertained us while Father spent those many days and nights away from home working to support all of us. Because she was a Jew, the German invaders and their French collaborators condemned Mother to death. Like the monsters did with Father, they forcibly returned Mother to Poland to be murdered. In the midst of this calamity, Mother was still thinking only about her family. Jacques heeded Mother’s last words. Less than a year after we left the Camp de la route de Limoges behind, my brother Jacques risked his own life once again in order to save my life, and the lives of Nathan, Paulette and Annette.

## ***B. BACK AT THE MOULIN***

The four of us returned to our house at the Moulin. Jacques pedaled slowly, pulling the girls in the cart, and I walked behind them. Everybody was quiet on the way back. When we arrived at the house Nathan was waiting for us. In the midst of all of the chaos that surrounded us, the five Szklarz children, ages 4 ½ to 17, were left alone to fend for ourselves.

After Mother was arrested one of my classmates, Yves Perrin, came over to our house. He lived across the Route Nationale from our school. Yves had a favorite model airplane that his father made for him. The wingspan was about one-foot, and it was a fine piece of craftsmanship. The model airplane was very authentic and Yves used to show it off to everybody. It was suspended on wires from a ceiling in one of the rooms in his house, and I never saw him take it down to play with it. Yves brought his prized model airplane with him when he came to see me. He held it out to me and said, “Here, I want you to have this.” I told him thank you, and I accepted his gift. I lived in Virolet for three years and, unlike in Metz, I never met an anti-Semite or witnessed any acts of anti-Semitism by the civilians.

Things were different in Poitiers. I saw a picture in a newspaper and read the accompanying story. The picture was of a horse or ox drawn wagon that was filled with Jewish men and women wearing yellow stars. The picture was taken in the Place d’Armes, in the center of Poitiers. A

sign on the back of the wagon said, “This is what Jews look like.” There was also a priest in the wagon wearing a yellow star. The article explained that because one of his grandparents was a Jew, he too was a Jew.

Jacques became our caregiver. He did the shopping and cooking. At the same time, he was working for a mason and repairing houses. I continued with my chores, getting wood for the stove and water from the spring. We were still receiving our refugees’ stipend from the government or from Jewish relief agencies. Jacques paid Madame Boileau to take care of Paulette and Annette during the day when we were not home. They would go to Madame Boileau in the morning when Nathan and I went to school and Jacques went to work. They ate all of their meals with the Boileaus, and they returned to our house for the evening. Madame Boileau asked Jacques if we had any fabric in the house, and told him to give it to her. Jacques found some fabric and she made two pairs of shorts for me and for Nathan to wear.

School had started in the first week of October 1942, shortly before Mother was arrested. Nathan and I walked into the classroom after Mother was arrested wearing the yellow stars on our jackets. Madame Frapier looked at us and the yellow stars on our jackets and she said, “You know, I want you to take those things off. I don’t want to see those things. Just throw it away.” She was furious that we were made to wear those yellow stars. She could not bear looking at us wearing those yellow stars. Madame Frapier told all of the Jewish children in the class to “Throw those things away. Don’t wear that.” We all took the stars off of our garments. Nathan and I spoke with the other Jewish kids in class whose parents had also been arrested. We got together and decided to write a letter to Marshal Pétain, who was the leader of the State of France, and ask him to tell us where our parents were. We never received an answer to our letter. We also sent a similar letter to the French Red Cross, and they answered us. Their letter said not to worry, that they were all working in a camp, and that everybody was well.

There was a seal on the door to the apartment downstairs where Uncle Aron and Aunt Chaya and our cousins had lived. It was a red wax seal stuck between the jamb and the door. Jacques told me that one day, when he was home alone, German soldiers came to the Moulin with trucks. They went into Uncle Aron’s apartment downstairs and stole whatever they wanted and put it on the truck. Then they came upstairs to our apartment. Jacques told them, “I live here. You can’t come in and

take our stuff.” Jacques said that the German soldiers looked at him and they were baffled. They left the apartment and didn’t touch anything. The German soldiers did the same thing to the other empty Jewish homes. They took the keys when they arrested the last person, put seals on the doors, and then they returned to ransack the homes and steal the contents. France was occupied by German thieves and murderers.

### C. *LIGUGÉ*

Jacques received a notice from the government that Nathan and I would have to leave the Moulin and go to live with a foster family in Ligugé. We went to live with Monsieur and Madame Madeleine Berquin and their family. They lived in a house near Le Clain, the river that ran through Ligugé. Monsieur Berquin was a cheminot and he worked for the railroad as a track man. Madame Berquin cooked for us. Monsieur Berquin brought back a deer that he caught and killed in a trap that he had set. It had an odd taste and I didn’t like it, but I ate it. The eldest daughter sang a lot and I used to sing with her. She sang old French songs and she taught me a lot of those songs, including kids’ songs and farmer songs. I can still remember some of them. She worked in a local mill with her younger sister. The mill manufactured synthetic fabrics out of rayon. All of the natural fibers, like wool, cotton and silk were taken by the Germans for the war to make uniforms and parachutes. The whole family was nice and kind and they treated Nathan and me well.

Once or twice a week Nathan and I would walk back to Virolet to visit Paulette and Annette and play with them. Jacques would come to Ligugé to visit us once in a while. He usually brought us something, like a toy to play with. Nathan and I also played in an empty building across the street from the Berquins’ house. A section of the building was built on pilings and it protruded over the river. There was a hole in the floor near the pilings, and Nathan and I were able to climb through the hole and into the empty building. The German army’s Afrika Korps was fighting in North Africa. They used Ligugé as a depot to store military equipment that was going to be shipped to the south of France and then across the Mediterranean Sea to North Africa. Armored vehicles, motorcycles and side cars were painted in desert camouflage and marked with the Afrika Korps symbol, which was a palm tree with a Nazi swastika. Eventually the Germans used the empty building as a warehouse to store Afrika Korps equipment. They filled it up with spare parts and maintenance

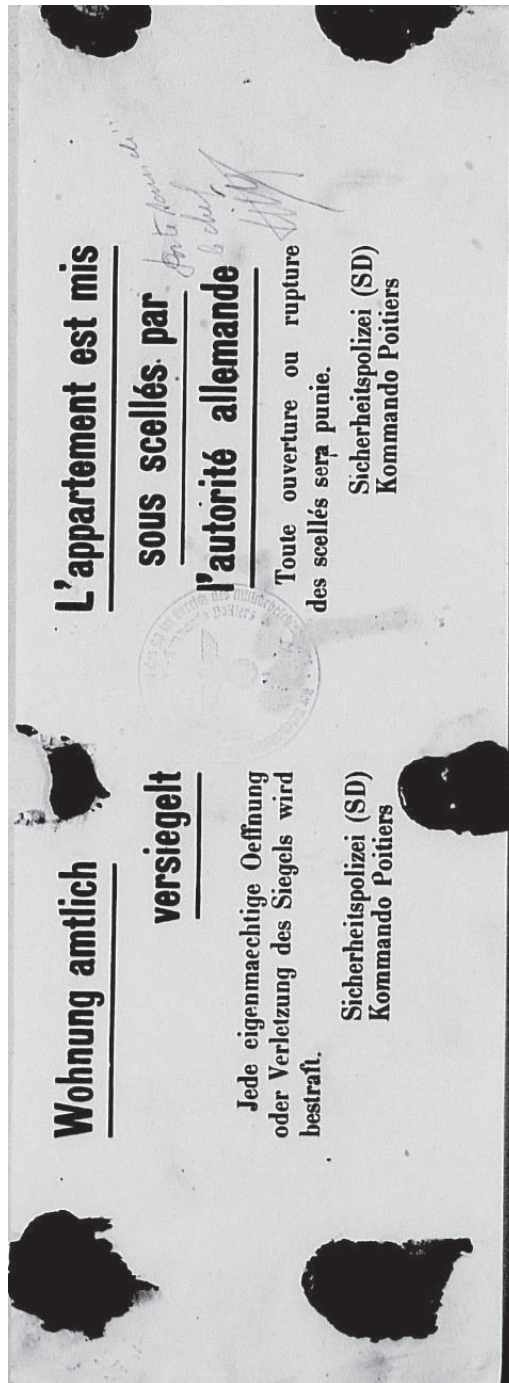


equipment for motorcycles including tires, batteries, cables, chains, gauges and lots of tools. That didn't stop Nathan and me from sneaking into the building. We became saboteurs again. The building was locked but unguarded and the Germans didn't fix the hole in the floor. Nathan and I snuck in at night. We took parts and tools and tossed them into a deep spot in the river. We did that for quite a few nights. It made us feel good; we thought that we would make the war a little shorter by dumping that stuff into the river.

Nathan and I went to different schools in Ligugé, but they were across the street from one another and about a ten-minute walk from the Berquins' house. I was preparing to take the examination for my Certificat d'Études Primaires Élémentaires which was the diploma that I would get for graduating from primary school and passing the examination. My new teacher was Monsieur Arnaud. He had a moustache and he wore a beret. He was also the physical education teacher. He stressed that I should work at physical education because I might need physical strength to survive in the future. Like my teacher in Virolet, Madame Frapier, Monsieur Arnaud was a true Républicain. He was a very dedicated man. He was very encouraging and he watched over me. He told me that I shouldn't be down and that I should work hard and do well in sports and in school. Madame Frapier had started the process of preparing me for the Certificat d'Études Primaires Élémentaires examination. Monsieur Arnaud continued that process, which involved memorization, repetition and cramming. He gave us shortcuts to remember the many subjects that might be on the examination. For example, OrAlBoBo was a way to remember cities in Algeria, which was a French colony: Oran, Algiers, Bougie and Bône. On the day of the examination we took the train from Ligugé to Poitiers. When we arrived we walked over to a large school building. We walked upstairs to the attic where there was a big room with desks. The test papers and pencils were waiting for us. I was apprehensive about the examination but it turned out to be easy for me. I remembered everything and had no problem taking the examination. The geography question was about Indochina, which I knew very well. The examination took several hours and I thought I passed the examination but I had to wait for the final results. Monsieur Arnaud received the results and he told me that I passed the examination and that my Certificat d'Études would be mailed to me.

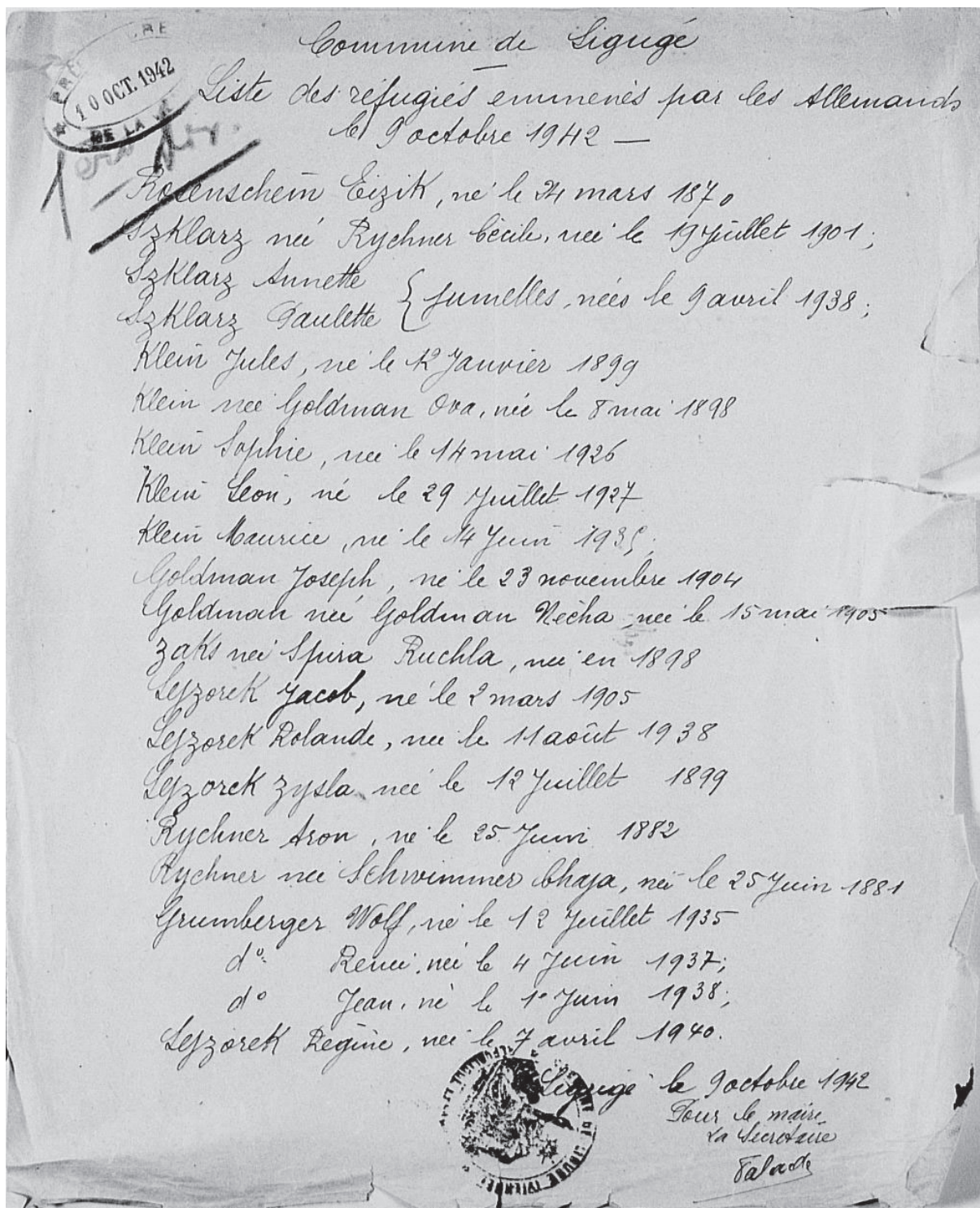
I didn't receive my Certificat d'Études while I was staying in Ligugé with the Berquin family. The Union Générale des Israélites de

France, the UGIF, was an organization established by the Vichy government's Office of Jewish Affairs to consolidate all of the Jewish organizations of France into one single unit. The ostensible purpose of the UGIF was to furnish social aid for the Jews of France and to set up orphanages and other social services. At the end of May or the beginning of June in 1943 Jacques was informed that Nathan, Paulette, Annette and me had been ordered to report to UGIF Center No. 28. Eight months after Mother was arrested, and eleven months after Father was arrested, the Szklarz children were going to Paris.



*Seal placed on the doors of Jewish homes after the residents were arrested and deported.*

Courtesy of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum



Commune of Ligugé  
 List of refugees taken by  
 the Germans on October 9, 1942

Courtesy of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

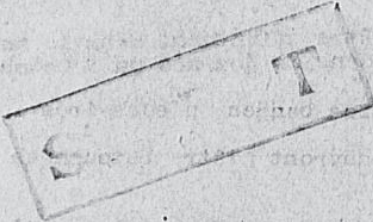


8 Octobre 1942 .

1ère

2ème

6914



LE COMMISSAIRE CENTRAL DE POLICE  
POITIERS

Arrestation de juifs .

1°- Liste- 2°- Réquisition - 3°- <sup>23</sup>Bandes .

Par ordre des autorités d'occupation, vous voudrez bien faire procéder immédiatement à l'arrestation des juifs étrangers figurant sur la liste ci-jointe et les transférer aussitôt au camp d'internement de la Route de Linoges à Poitiers .

Les personnes âgées et non transportables seront laissées provisoirement à leur domicile .

Les enfants nés de parents étrangers, mais de nationalité française, ne doivent pas être arrêtés . Toutefois, les enfants âgés de moins de 6 ans, même de nationalité française, dont les parents seront arrêtés, devront être laissés avec leurs parents et suivront, par conséquent, ceux-ci au camp de Poitiers .

Lors de son arrestation, le juif ne peut emmener que son argent liquide, deux couvertures, deux paires de chaussures, les articles de toilette et les ustensiles pour la nourriture ; il est formellement interdit d'emporter autre chose que ces articles strictement indispensables .

Les logements doivent être fermés et munis du cachet allemand .

.../...

Arrest order  
October 8, 1942

Courtesy of United States Holocaust Memorial Museum



Vous voudrez bien utiliser à cet effet les bandes  
ci-jointes et veiller à ce que la cire à cacheter pénètre  
bien dans le bois .

Les clés des maisons et appartements des personnes  
arrêtées devront être munies d'une étiquette solide,  
sur laquelle seront indiqués le nom, la commune, la rue et  
le numéro .

Ces arrestations devront être effectuées dans la nuit du 8  
au 9 Octobre et au plus tard dans la journée du 9 Octobre .

Ci-joint, la réquisition des bandes nécessaires .

Les bandes non utilisées devront être retournées  
le plus tôt possible .

D'autre part, vous voudrez bien renforcer le service  
de surveillance du camp de Poitiers pendant le séjour des  
dits juifs au camp , qui ne sera d'ailleurs pas de longue  
durée, en y adjoignant 4 agents de police .

Vous devrez me faire parvenir un rapport d'exécution  
dans le moindre délai, avec la liste des personnes arrêtées .

P. le Préfet délégué de la Vienne :  
Le Secrétaire Général,

RÉGION DE POITIERS

POITIERS, le

*L'Intendant de Police*

A

Monsieur le Directeur

du Camp d'Internement de la Route de Limoges

POITIERS  
-:-:-:-:-:-:-:-:-:-

Le S.D. de Poitiers vient de m'informer qu'il autorisait le Juif SZKLAVZ à emmener ses jeunes soeurs ANNETTE et PAULETTE.

Ces jeunes enfants figurent sur la liste que Mr HIPPE a fait établir des enfants français à libérer du Camp, liste que la juive WYROBEK a en sa possession.

L'Intendant de Police:



Letter authorizing Jacques Szklarz to  
take Paulette and Annette  
from the Camp de la Route de Limoges  
Courtesy of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum



## *CHAPTER VI*

### *PARIS*

#### *A. RUE LAMARCK*

We were ordered to report to Paris, but to be able to arrive in the morning at UGIF Center No. 28 we had to travel by train from Ligugé during the night. That presented two problems. First, Jews were not supposed to travel outside of the region where they lived. Second, there was a curfew and it was against the law for Jews to be outside of their homes after dark. Jacques discussed the situation with Madame Berquin. She told Jacques that she had a relative who was a policeman. She called him and explained the dilemma to him. He told Madame Berquin what train we should take to Paris, explaining that one of his friends was going to be the policeman checking identification papers on that train. He told her to make sure that we had a few packs of tobacco with us, and that when the policeman came by us on the train we should give him the tobacco and he would not bother us. Madame Berquin briefed Jacques on the plan and he purchased tobacco on the black market. The older Berquin daughter who sang with me gave me a book of old French songs as a going-away present. Jacques brought Paulette and Annette to Ligugé. Although Jacques had not been ordered to report to UGIF Center No. 28, he was going to accompany Nathan, Paulette, Annette and me on the journey to Paris. Madame Berquin was also going to travel with us.

We walked to the Ligugé train station that evening and boarded the train as instructed by Madame Berquin's relative. The railroad was owned and operated by the Société Nationale des Chemins de fer Français. The "SNCF" was operated by Frenchmen and it was and still is the French National Railway. Sure enough, when the policeman came over to where we were sitting, Madame Berquin handed him the packs of tobacco and he didn't ask us for identity papers; he kept walking down



the aisle and he left us alone. The train travelled all night, and we arrived in Paris at the Gare d'Austerlitz on the morning of June 8, 1943. As soon as we arrived, Jacques told us that he had to leave. His identity papers were stamped "Jew" and he didn't have any authorization to be in the Paris region. Jacques told me that he was not returning to Virolet. He had contacted Monsieur Knecht and told him what was happening. Monsieur Knecht found Jacques a job working for a farmer on a farm near the town of Argenton-sur-Creuse, which is located sixty miles due east of Poitiers in the Indre Department in Central France. We said goodbye to Jacques. He gave me the address of the farm near Argenton-sur-Creuse where he would be staying. Madame Berquin then took Nathan, Paulette, Annette and me on the Paris Metro. UGIF Center No. 28 was located at 27 Rue Lamarck in a neighborhood of Paris called Montmartre, the "mountain of the martyr."

Montmartre derives its name from the name of the hill on which the neighborhood is built. At 427 feet high, the hill of Montmartre is the highest natural feature in Paris. It is also an iconic part of Paris. Some of the most famous artists in the world, including Claude Monet, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, Pablo Picasso and Vincent Van Gogh had studios or worked in and around Montmartre. We emerged from the Metro at the Place Pigalle, which is located at the lower part of the hill near the cabaret Moulin Rouge. The summit of Montmartre is crowned by the Basilica du Sacré-Coeur, a Roman Catholic church that is clad in brilliant white travertine stone. It is one of the most visible and recognizable landmarks in Paris.

The artist colony on Montmartre is celebrated as a jewel of French culture and heralded as an example of France's contribution to humanity, and Sacré-Coeur shines brightly from the top of the hill. By contrast our destination in Montmartre was inconspicuous and ignominious. But that place near the summit of Montmartre and beneath Sacré-Coeur should be remembered and it should forever tarnish France's contributions to humanity because of the many Jewish children whose paths to martyrdom began at 27 Rue Lamarck. Rue Lamarck is one of the roads that circle the crest of Montmartre, just below Sacré-Coeur. 27 Rue Lamarck is on the corner of Rue du Chevalier de la Bane. The building is three-stories tall on the side that faces the Rue Lamarck; because of the slope of the hill the building is five stories tall on the side that faces the Rue Paul Albert. A stairway across the street from 27 Rue Lamarck leads directly up to Sacré-Coeur.

I ascended the steep streets of Montmartre with Nathan, Paulette, Annette and Madame Berquin and we eventually arrived at 27 Rue Lamarck. Madame Berquin signed us in at the office, she gave each of us a kiss, and then she said goodbye and left.

There were between 104 and 127 children at Rue Lamarck when I was there; most of them were between the ages of five and eight.<sup>11</sup> All of us were Jewish and our parents had been arrested and deported. The UGIF ran the home. I was one of the oldest kids there. The first day we were there they checked our hair for lice. Any children who had hair lice had to have their hair shaved off. Paulette had beautiful blonde hair, but she had lice and they shaved her hair off. I slept with the other older boys in a room on one of the upper floors of the building. Two of the older boys were from Metz. Their names were Simon and Albert Kaplan. I didn't know them when I lived in Metz. I could see part of Sacré-Coeur from the window of my room. The outskirts of Paris were being bombed on some of the nights that I was at the Rue Lamarck. It was very frightening; we could hear the air raid sirens and the explosions from the bombs and we could see the glow from the bombs through the window.

The day after we arrived, I walked with some of the older boys around the courtyard that faced the Rue Lamarck. The courtyard was surrounded by a solid rock wall, about three or four feet high. We looked out over the wall and down the street. Somebody asked us, "What are you doing here?" About two days later, men came to work on the wall. They put cement on the top of the wall and then they broke up glass bottles and put the shards of glass into the cement all around the top of the stone wall.

There was a kitchen and a dining room near the courtyard. Most of the meals were broths prepared with vegetables, like lettuce, cabbage, root vegetables and topinambour, also called a Jerusalem artichoke. Each child was given a portion of bread. The server would cut a piece of bread off of a loaf and weigh it and then give it to you. You were only allowed so many grams of bread, so they would weigh your ration every time that it was served to you.

I was walking around the courtyard one day with the Kaplan brothers. Next to the dining room and kitchen there were stacks of empty crates that were used to bring in the vegetables for the broth. We had been talking about getting out of the Rue Lamarck and going to London. I looked at the empty crates and said to the Kaplans, "You know, I can draw. I could draw and make plans for a plane. And we have all the

wood here and we're going to build a plane and fly to London." I took paper and I drew an airplane. The Kaplans asked me, "How are we going to spin the propeller?" I told them, "Well, we're going to get hold of some rubber and we're going to twist it. We're going to have two rubber bands, one twists and one unrolls." My fantasy kept me busy drawing and hoping.

There was a teenage Jewish girl at the Rue Lamarck who was like a den mother to the younger children there. I probably knew her name back then, but over the years after the war I forgot about her and I forgot her name, until we were reunited. Her name is Denise Holstein and, like me, she is a witness to history.

On June 22, 1943, two-weeks after I arrived and just several weeks before my fourteenth birthday, I was told that I had to leave the Rue Lamarck the next day because I was too old to stay there. The UGIF had another place for me to stay with older boys. On June 23, 1943<sup>12</sup> I went over to my best buddy, my brother Nathan, and I told him, "You're in charge now." We had been inseparable all of our lives. I said goodbye to Nathan, Paulette and Annette. I packed a small wicker suitcase with some changes of underwear and socks and my music book from Ligugé. The UGIF gave me money for the Metro fare and directions to the next stop on this insane odyssey that was forced upon me. The address was 4 bis Rue des Rosiers in the 4ème arrondissement of Paris. I was also given a jacket to wear with the yellow star positioned over my heart identifying me as a "Juif." I stepped out into the Rue Lamarck with my small suitcase, on the other side of the stone wall capped with glass shards that imprisoned the Jewish children who were forced to go there. I began to walk away from the Rue Lamarck, leaving my brother Nathan and my twin sisters Paulette and Annette behind. For the first time in my life I was all alone. I descended the streets of Montmartre to the Metro station at Place Pigalle that would take me to my next destination, a place called L'École de Travail.

## **B.     *L'ÉCOLE DE TRAVAIL***

I took the Metro to the Saint-Paul station, which is located on the Rue des Rivoli. The Musée du Louvre is on the Rue de Rivoli, a short walk from Saint-Paul. I turned right from the Rue de Rivoli onto the Rue Pavée and walked north a short distance until I reached the Rue des Rosiers. I turned left at the corner and there, on the north side of the street

at No. 4 bis, was L'École de Travail.

In 1880 a group of Russian Jewish philanthropists petitioned Czar Alexander II for permission to start a fund to assist Jewish trade schools and establish agricultural schools and model farms in order to help lift Russia's five million Jews out of poverty. The success of the appeal led Russian authorities to create the "Society for Trades and Agricultural Labor" for Jews of Russia. In Russian, the organization was called *Obschestvo Remeslenovo i. Zemledelcheskovo Trouda*, and the acronym "ORT" was derived from that name. After World War I, ORT shifted its focus from Russia to assisting Jews worldwide.<sup>13</sup> In France ORT was called L'Organisation Reconstruction Travail. ORT ran a trade school for apprentices in the Marais neighborhood of Paris that was, and still is, called L'École de Travail. The trade school was originally founded in 1852, and it had dormitories where the students who needed room and board lived.

Like a typical French urban building, the front door of L'École de Travail opened into a central courtyard that was boxed in by the surrounding building. Just inside and to the left of the front door was the registrar's office. I went into the office and I was signed into a book called "Élèves de L'École de Travail" as number 1757.<sup>14</sup> The registrar asked for and recorded my name, my date of birth, and my address in Metz. In the column that was captioned "Entrée," the registrar recorded June 23, 1943. Because L'École de Travail was a trade school, there was also a column in the registration book captioned "Profession." The registrar identified me as an "ecolier," which means "schoolboy." The last two columns were captioned "Sortie," for the date of exit from the school, and "Observations." Those columns were blank. I was told to turn in my ration book. After I was signed in I was told to turn in my wicker suitcase in the laundry room where there was a storage area with shelves. I went to the laundry room and I was directed to the dormitory. I was issued two sheets, a blanket, a pillow and a towel. I was instructed to go and pick out an empty bunk in the large dormitory room that was filled with rows of beds. Once a week I was issued a fresh set of linen and clean clothing when I turned my soiled clothes in to be washed. The person who was in charge of the dormitory showed me how to make the bed with the sheets. Everything had to be neat and stretched perfectly, with no wrinkles on the bedsheets, just like in the military.

After I got settled in the dormitory room I went downstairs and found a group of boys milling around. All of the boys at L'École de



Travail were Jewish. Some of them boarded at the school, like I did. Others attended classes during the day and slept off premises elsewhere in Paris. One of the boys approached me. He was short in height, a little “shorty” like me. He looked at me and said, “I want to fight you” and then he spit in my face. He said, “I’m the strongest from all the short guys in here and I want to make sure you’re not.” He directed me to go into a big hall in the back of the building called the *salle du fond*. We walked to the room, and all of the boys followed us. The group made a circle around the provocateur and me. Although I was short and thin for my age, my height didn’t reflect my physical strength. I had just spent the last four years carrying buckets of spring water upstairs to our apartment at the Moulin, helping out with other labor-intensive chores, and taking physical education classes under the watchful eyes of Monsieur Arnaud. The little punk provocateur didn’t know this. As he approached me in the circle I jumped on him, grabbed him by the neck and pulled him down to the floor. I started to squeeze him tightly. Eventually, he relented and said “you’re the strongest one.” We ignored each other for the remainder of the time that I was at L’École de Travail.

There were four other boys from Metz at L’École de Travail. Simon and Albert Kaplan came over from the Rue Lamarck the same day that I did.<sup>15</sup> The two other boys from Metz were also brothers; their surname was Rappaport.

When I arrived at L’École de Travail I was told that I was there because they were going to teach me a trade, and how to handle myself in the future. I was assigned to classes to learn how to become a draftsman so as to draw architectural plans and blueprints, and to learn how to draw and to sketch. Those classes were given in the building on the Rue des Rosiers. Once or twice a week I took a sculpture class. That class wasn’t given at L’École de Travail. I had to travel to another building on the Rue Claude Bernard in the 5ème arrondissement in Paris. This was on the Left Bank of the River Seine -- Rive Gauche -- in the famed Latin Quarter. There was a Pleyel Piano showroom near the building. I was given just enough money for the round trip Metro fare.

There was a small window by the office in the hallway near the entrance to L’École de Travail. A man was in the office and he had a book in which he recorded the time when I left the school and the time when I returned. I had to stop by that window and knock on it and give my name to the man inside every time I left and returned. I was told that if I didn’t return to the school before the curfew, then I would be reported

as missing to the police and they would find me and arrest me. Every time that I went out onto the streets of Paris I had to wear the jacket with the yellow star, or another garment with the yellow star sewn on it. I was also told that I could not go into the parks, the museums or the movies. I was living in one of the great cities in the world, but I didn't go anywhere in Paris other than back and forth to the school where I took the sculpture class. I was too afraid to go anywhere else in Paris and I didn't have any money or the interest to do anything else in Paris. I was focused on returning to L'École de Travail on time to avoid being arrested by the police.

L'École de Travail is located in central Paris on the Right Bank of the River Seine -- Rive Droite -- in the Parisian neighborhood called Le Marais. It is close to the Place des Vosges, where Victor Hugo lived during a part of the nineteenth century. Le Marais became a center of the Jewish community in Paris, and by extension in France, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when many Jews immigrated from Eastern Europe and took up residence in that neighborhood. Rue des Rosiers ran through the heart of the Jewish community in Le Marais. When I arrived in Le Marais I didn't find a vibrant Jewish community with synagogues, shtiebels, libraries, and kosher butchers and bakeries. Instead, I found a ghost town. The entrances to the synagogues were boarded up. The Jewish businesses were shuttered. I asked at L'École de Travail, "what's going on there?" They told me that the Jews in the Marais were arrested and taken away to the Vélodrome d'Hiver.

I settled into a routine at L'École de Travail. Every morning I would get up and make my bed. There was room in the back of the dormitory room with a trough sink to wash-up. I had to report to the dining room at a specified hour for breakfast. I was given a bread ration that was expected to last me for several days or for a week. The loaf was cut and then weighed to make sure that the ration weighed the correct amount of grams. Everybody had a cubicle with a key to store his bread ration. A man who was in charge of the dining room had the keys to the cubicles. He would unlock my cubicle and I would then break off a portion of bread to go with my meal. I could tear off as large a portion of bread as I wanted to eat with my meal, but I would not get any more bread if I finished my ration before the next ration was cut, weighed and given to me. The bread was served with vegetable broth. After breakfast I went to my classes.

Drafting class was held in a classroom on the upper floor of the

two-story building. The teacher taught us how to draw the alphabet, hatch marks, and notations for different materials, like steel, copper and aluminum. He explained the basics of blueprints. Every day I had to draw letters of the alphabet, print, print, and print, until the teacher was pleased and it was perfect. The drafting teacher demanded perfection. If it was not perfect, then it was not good. It would take hours and hours of practice to attain the perfection that was demanded. After drafting class, I went down to the lower floor for the drawing class that was taught by another teacher. He selected a model and displayed it in the classroom. The students sat at easels with paper and pencils and sketched the model.

I was given a big chunk of clay to work with in the sculpture class. The teacher showed us how to sculpt Grecian style laurel leaves and flowers. The clay was placed on a big table with all of the sculpting tools. The teacher was very good and he would look at my work and instruct me on how to improve it. That school also had a carpentry class. The classroom had a window and I watched the students learning carpentry. One of the students was near the window and I watched what he was doing in class. I didn't meet him or get to talk to him in Paris. I learned his name after I left Paris. Henri "Lynx" Kirchenbaum (Kaye) and I would become lifelong friends.

We were not given a meal for lunch. Dinner was served after the drawing class. Again, we had vegetable broth and our bread ration. I was never hungry. I was scared and more concerned about surviving than I was about the food that I was eating. The entire time that I was in Paris at Rue Lamarck and at L'École de Travail, no one ever told me where my parents were, and I didn't ask. It was inconceivable to me at that time that Jews were being exterminated in death camps. Even though I had heard Mother saying in Yiddish that they were killing Jews, I could not accept that it was true. All I knew, and what was in my mind, was that they took my parents away, put them in a camp, and then after the war was over everybody was going to come home. It is also possible that I did know about the death camps, but I was putting it out of my mind, unwilling to accept the fact that my parents were murdered and that they would not be coming home. I lived in constant fear of being arrested, thinking that it was only a matter of time before they would come to arrest me too. All of the boys knew what could happen, and what probably would happen, to us, but we didn't discuss it. We just tried to function somehow.

I was always thinking about being prepared to run away from

L'École de Travail, and that I should stay in good shape to be able to run and hide when the Germans came to arrest me. A few times when I went to the sculpture class on Rue Claude Bernard, I decided to run back to L'École de Travail instead of taking the Metro. There were German soldiers and officers walking in the streets of Paris and frequenting the sidewalk cafés and bars. While I was running I took my jacket and folded it over and put my arm on it to conceal the yellow star. If I spotted Germans on the side of the street where I was running, I crossed over to the other side of the street. I ran from the Rue Claude Bernard up the Rue Gay Lussac past the Jardin du Luxembourg, where I could not enter because I was a Jew. I continued north up to the River Seine and crossed over the river to the Right Bank on the Pont des Arts. Once I was across the river I went past the Musée du Louvre, turned right on the Rue de Rivoli and headed east directly back to L'École de Travail. A few times I extended my run. I turned left on the Rue de Rivoli and ran west along the Jardin des Tuileries to the Place de la Concorde, then up to the Place Vendôme, where the Hôtel Ritz had been commandeered and turned into a German military headquarters. I returned to Le Marais on the Rue Saint Honoré, which ended at Rue des Halles which, in turn, ran into the Rue de Rivoli.

There was a back room at L'École de Travail that was called the "salle de piano," the piano room. The older boys, from sixteen to eighteen or nineteen years old, hung out in that room. They closed the door and played music and would not let the younger boys in. The younger boys and I put our ears against the door and against the window to try to hear what they were doing in the room, but we could not hear what they were talking about. The group of older boys left the school in the morning and returned together moments before the curfew. As far as I could tell they didn't attend classes. One day they didn't return to L'École de Travail. We were told that they had been arrested at a Metro station and then taken outside of Paris and shot.

After we received that news, the younger boys had a meeting in the dormitory room. We figured that the Germans were going to come for us too. I wrote a letter to Jacques telling him what happened. I wrote that things were going bad. I told him that I was afraid and that all of the boys at the school were probably going to be arrested and deported. There was a short balcony that protruded from the upper level and overlooked the interior courtyard of L'École de Travail. We placed a pile of bricks and stones in a corner of the balcony, planning to throw them at the



German soldiers and the French police if they came to arrest us. I also helped the other boys to cut a hole, about 2 feet by 2 feet, in a corner of the roof over the dormitory room. We removed the roof tiles and cut a hole in the wood that was underneath the tiles. We planned on escaping through that hole and onto the roof when they came to arrest us.

Several days after I mailed my letter, Jacques came to L'École de Travail and he found me. Jacques spoke to the Director of the school and he told him that he wanted to take me away with him. The Director refused to let me go with Jacques. He told Jacques that I was registered with the police and that I could not leave the school. Jacques devised a plan. He told me that he would go and get Nathan, Paulette and Annette. All of us would leave Paris together and go back to the Poitiers region. He told me to leave L'École de Travail late in the day and meet him at the Metro Saint-Paul. I asked him if it was okay to bring along a boy that I met at L'École de Travail. The boy's parents had been deported and they had an apartment at 40 Rue de Ruisseau in Paris. Jacques said that he could come with us. Because we were escaping late in the day, we needed a place to stay for the night and we planned on staying in that boy's apartment. I would leave L'École de Travail first, and then my friend would leave and meet me, Jacques, Nathan, Paulette and Annette at the apartment a couple of hours later.

I prepared for my escape from L'École de Travail. I went to the laundry room to get an extra change of underwear and an extra shirt. I wrapped the clothing in brown paper with my music book from Ligugé. I was going to meet Jacques in the afternoon, as planned, after I finished with my classes. A delivery truck arrived and the front door was open to the Rue des Rosiers. I waited until there was no one in the hallway, and then I snuck past the window by the door and walked out into the Marais. I left my jacket with the yellow star behind in the dormitory, and my shirt didn't have a yellow star sewn into it over my heart. I didn't have any identity papers.

The book that recorded my arrival at L'École de Travail on June 23, 1943 is now called the "Registre des anciens élèves de L'École de Travail." I returned to L'École de Travail in 1973, thirty years after I left, and I asked to see the book. The book was brought out to me. The "Sortie" column was filled in with the date August 11, 1943. The "Observations" column was filled in with a single word: "Disparu."<sup>16</sup>

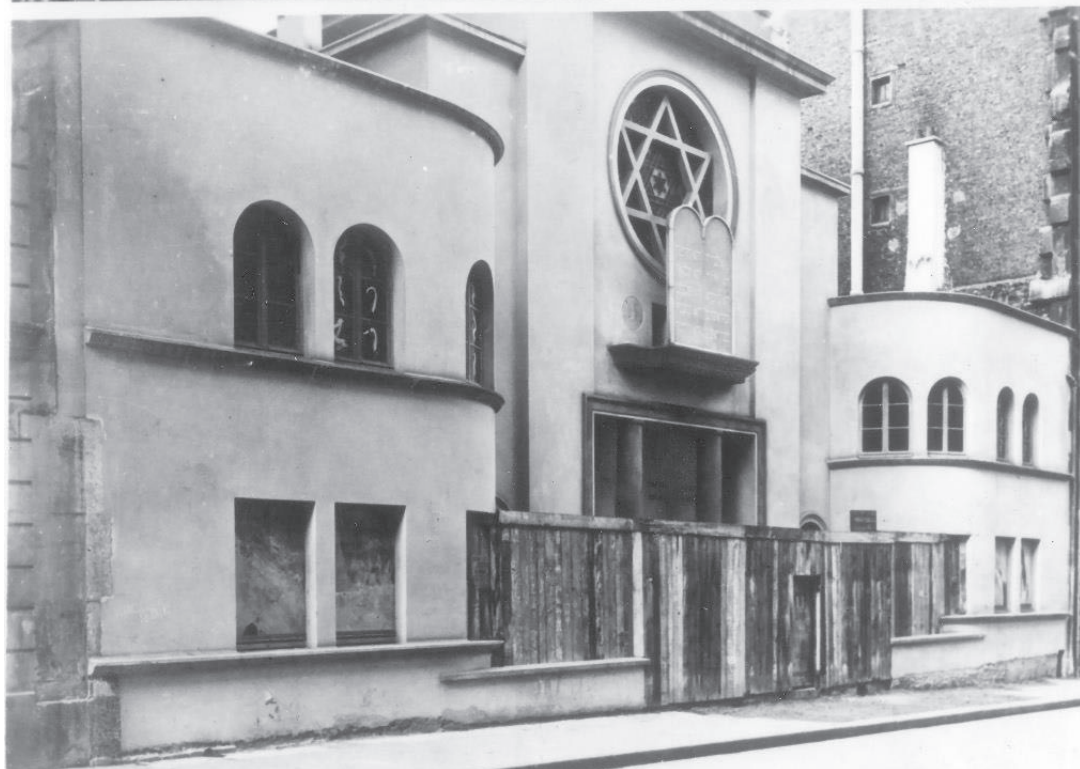


Paris, France 2012  
 27 Rue Lamarck  
 Montmartre  
 Former U.G.I.F. Centre No. 28

U.G.I.F.		Situation à la date du <u>8 Juin 1943</u> <u>000115</u>		à 17 heures	
Centre No	<u>28</u>	<u>145</u>	<u>104</u>	présents au Centre	
	<u>EFFECTIF</u>	enfants	<u>5</u>	à l'Hôpital	
	<u>LITS DISPONIBLES</u>	<u>55</u>	<u>11</u>	à Montgeron	
	<u>37 Filles</u>	<u>68 Garçons</u>	<u>45</u>	à Evreux	
NOUVEAUX du <u>8 Juin 1943</u>					
Entrées					
NOM :	PRENOMS :	DATE & LIEU DE :	NATIONALITÉ :	ADRESSE :	PROVENANCE :
		NAISSANCE	LITE		
934	SELIARZ Jean	10/7/29 Metz	Fre	Liguge la Réginière	Vienne Poitiers
935	" Nathan	10/4/38 Metz	Fre	"	"
936	" Paulette	9/4/38 Metz	Fre	"	"
937	" Annette	9/4/38 Metz	Fre	"	"
:	:	:	:	:	:
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:	:	:	:	:	:
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Register of admissions  
 U.G.I.F. Center No. 28  
 27 Rue Lamarck, Montmartre  
 Paris, France





Paris, France  
Shut Jewish Store and Synagogue  
in the Marais

From the archives of the YIVO Institute  
for Jewish Research, New York



Paris, France 2012  
Rue des Rosier  
No. 4 bis  
95



2/1

N° D'ordre	Noms et Prénoms.	N° Matière	Date et Lieu de Naissance.	Profession.	Nom et Demeure du Patron
1756	Kaylan Simon		7-2-1930 à Metz	Lycéen	
1757	Schwarz Jean		10-7-1929 à Metz	Ecolier	
1758	Leizer Henri		23-12-1928 à Paris 12	Ecolier.	
1759	Friebourg Raymond		28-10-1927 à Metz	Ecolier.	
1760	Orhan Julien		6-6-1927 à Paris		
1761	Tuck Albert		15-1-1929 à Paris	Ecolier	
1762	Segalis Maurice		7-3-1928 à Paris	bijoutier	
1763	Bernizon William		5-12-1927 à Paris 10	app. mécanicien.	
1764	Willy Fischer		17-1-1928 à Nancy	app. <sup>faillure</sup> <del>travaux</del>	
1765	Scaja Samuel Bouquet		3-11-1929 à Paris 18	Ecolier.	
1766	Harra David		8-11-1926 à Paris 12	Sans.	

Registre des anciens élèves de L'École de Travail

47

Durée de l'Apprentissage		Domiciles des Parents ou Tuteurs.	Entrée.	Sortie.	Observations.
Depuis.	Jusqu'au				
		46. G <sup>e</sup> Rue Bonbas Moselle.	23-6-43.	25-3-1944.	Commissaire aussi: disparu
		7. Vincent. Rue Metz	23-6-43.	11-8-1943	Disparu
		12. Rue Chaumont Paris	28-6-43.	25-4-1944	Requis par sa famille
		31 Rue d. Tilliers à Nancy	28-6-43.	13-11-1943	
		12. R <sup>e</sup> Felix Tenier.	3-7-43	12-7-43	Renvoi de l'Ecole, remis à sa famille.
		159 rue des Chateaux des Rautins	6-7-43	20-7-1943.	a quitté l'Ecole, requis par sa famille.
		12 rue Rambuteau	8-7-43	25-7-1943	Disparu
		56. Rue Pajol.	9-7-43.	17-7-1943.	a quitté l'Ecole, requis par sa famille.
			12-7-43	deporté exilé 44	revenu de la déportation
		66. R <sup>e</sup> Champsomble Paris.	13-7-43	13-4-44.	Requis par sa famille
		41. Rue d. Brionet	2-8-1943.	deporté exilé 44	revenu de la déportation



Paris, France 2016  
Sign in/out window  
L'École de Travail



Paris, France 2016  
Metro St. Paul  
Spot where Jean and Jacques  
were stopped by the French police.



## CHAPTER VII

### DISPARU

#### A. CHÂTEAUX

I met Jacques according to plan at Metro Saint-Paul. Jacques was alone. I asked him, “what happened to Nathan, Paulette and Annette?” Jacques told me that the U.G.I.F. moved them from the Rue Lamarck in Montmartre to another facility just outside of Paris in Louveciennes. Jacques argued with the Director of the facility for hours to convince him to release our brother and sisters. Jacques told the Director that the children were going to be arrested and deported. The Director told Jacques that those were only rumors, that it will never happen, that the children were perfectly safe there and that Jacques should not worry about it.

We ran down into the Metro together. As we ran around a bend in the hallway of the Metro we encountered a squad of three French policemen. One of them ordered us to stop. We obeyed, and a policeman came over to me and asked me what was in the package that I was carrying. He poked the package with a stick that he was holding and he told me, “There’s something in there, so open it up.” I told him that it was a book. He said, “I want to see it.” I opened up the package and showed the policeman my laundry and my music book. He then said, “Okay, you can go.” Fate intervened in our lives once again. The policeman didn’t ask us for our identity papers. I didn’t have any identity papers. Jacques’ identity papers were stamped “Juif” and showed that he resided in central France and not in Paris. Neither one of us was wearing the yellow star.

We went to the apartment at 40 Rue de Ruisseau, following the directions that my friend had given to me. My friend told me that the police had placed a red wax seal between the door jamb and the door to



the apartment, which was one flight up on the first floor. He also told me where I would find a hidden key to the apartment. We arrived at dusk. I found the hidden key and we peeled the wax seal away, being careful not to break it. We went into the apartment but didn't turn on the lights. My friend warned me that the French police would patrol the streets with informers who would point out the apartments of Jews who were not supposed to be there anymore. Sure enough, when it became dark outside, I looked out the window and saw two policemen patrolling the street with a civilian. They were looking back and forth up at the windows of the apartments.

I cannot remember the name of the boy who provided us with shelter that night, but he didn't meet us at his parents' sealed apartment as we had planned. According to the "Registre des anciens élèves de L'École de Travail," Abraham Froin, born on February 23, 1928 in Paris, was registered at the school on June 18, 1943 as number 1754. His address is listed as 40 Rue de Ruisseau in Paris. The registration book states that Abraham Froin left the school on August 2, 1943, and the "Observations" column states, "Disparu." I have seen photographs of 40 Rue de Ruisseau, and it is the apartment building where Jacques and I found shelter that evening, thanks to Abraham Froin.

Jacques and I left early in the morning. We locked the door to the apartment, pushed the wax seal back in place and returned the key to its hiding place. We went to the railroad station and boarded a train for Poitiers. German soldiers and French police were in the train station, but they didn't bother us. Nobody asked us for identity papers on the train ride to Poitiers. When we arrived in Poitiers we went to the place where Jacques had stashed his bicycle. Jacques told me that he had to go and see someone to find out where we were going next. I was to wait for him at that spot, and he left. Jacques was gone for about 45 minutes. When he returned he told me, "We're going to Châteauroux right now."

Châteauroux is seventy-one miles northeast of Poitiers and nineteen miles north of Argenton-sur-Creuse. Jacques' bicycle didn't have inflatable rubber tires. He improvised and fastened rubber hoses onto the front and rear wheel rims with clips. I sat sideways on the crossbar and Jacques started pedaling towards Châteauroux. Jacques didn't provide me with any details about why we were going to Châteauroux, he just said that he had matters to take care of there. When I became sore from sitting on the bar, we walked. We stopped at a grocery store along the road and Jacques bought a bottle of lemonade and

a piece of camembert cheese. I had not eaten anything since the morning of the day that I escaped from L'École de Travail.

I don't know how it was possible for us to travel the distance to Châteauroux on bicycle and on foot. Somehow, Jacques persevered. He overcame fear and fatigue and found the courage and strength to get me there. I was the only sibling who Jacques was able to liberate from Paris, and nothing was going to stop him from fulfilling Mother's last words: "Save the children." We arrived in Châteauroux in the evening and Jacques said that we had to find a place to stay because we could not be out in the street and we could not check into a hotel. We found ourselves in a plaza and we saw a convent. We went over to the convent and Jacques knocked on the door. A nun opened the door and said, "Yes?" Jacques told her point blank, "We are two Jewish children and we're looking for shelter. We need a place to sleep tonight and to hide." The nun was taken aback by what Jacques said. She said to us, "Do you know where you are?" Jacques answered, "Yes, a convent." The nun told us, "Turn around, do you see what's in the back of you?" We saw a big German flag on one of the buildings in the plaza. The nun said, "That's Gestapo headquarters over there. I hope they're not looking here, it's dangerous." She said, "Come in quick." She pushed us inside and then closed and locked the door behind us. She told us, "You know, I have no food to give you, but I'll put you up during the night. But the first thing in the morning you have to leave. It's too dangerous here if they looked out the window and they saw you here. So I want you to go in the morning." We said, "Okay."

The nun led us up into the attic. That space was used as an old age home. The beds in the room were filled with elderly women. The nun instructed us to pick any empty beds. Jacques and I slept in our clothes. At first light in the morning we got up and went downstairs. The nun was standing there waiting for us. She said, "I'm sorry. I have no food to give you. I have just enough for the residents." She then handed us a tin box and said, "I can only give you this. It's a box of cookies that I have. You can have that, but that's all I have." We thanked her, and she opened the door and we left.

Jacques knew where to go. We went to a plaza with a park, and Jacques motioned me over to a bench. Jacques told me, "You wait over here, I have to go see somebody to find out about the transportation." When Jacques returned he told me what happened. His contact in Poitiers gave him the name of a man to see in Châteauroux. Jacques met that man

and explained to him that I had run away from L'École de Travail and that I was looking for a place to hide. The man purchased a bus ticket to a town called Beaulieu-sur-Dordogne and he gave the bus ticket to Jacques. The bus was scheduled to depart Châteauroux early the next morning. He also gave Jacques the address to an office in Châteauroux, and he instructed him to tell me to go to that office. He told Jacques that the door would be unlocked and that the office would be empty, nobody was going to come into the office, there was a couch inside and that I should spend the night there. In the morning, at daybreak, I should leave the office and go to the bus station that was near the office. I was to find the bus to Beaulieu-sur-Dordogne, get on the bus, and somebody from UGIF would be waiting for me when I arrived. There was a home for Jewish children there, and that was where I was going to stay.

Jacques took me to that office in Châteauroux. When we got there he told me, "I have to go back to my town, because the police, I don't want to get in trouble with the cops. I'm gone for too long and they may arrest me." Jacques handed me the box of cookies and he said, "Here, you keep the box of cookies to eat." He had to return to the farm near Argenton-sur-Creuse. He said, "Goodbye. I'll see you, and you know, write to me, let me know where you are."

The war in Europe would rage on for almost two more years. I didn't hear from or see my brother Jacques again until after the war ended.

## **B. *BEAULIEU-SUR-DORDOGNE***

I laid down on the couch in the office but I couldn't fall asleep. I was afraid that if I fell asleep I would miss the bus. Beaulieu-sur-Dordogne is one hundred fifty miles due south from Châteauroux. The bus left early in the morning. It was a small bus, with about twenty passengers. It chugged along the route, mostly off of the main roads, and it frequently stopped to drop off and pick up passengers. Luckily, the bus was not boarded by any Germans or French police.

After a long journey, the bus stopped in a square in Beaulieu-sur-Dordogne. The driver said, "Everybody off." I got off the bus and started looking for the person who was supposed to meet me there. I waited and waited. About an hour, and still nobody showed up. I decided that I had to find the home for Jewish children that I had been told about. It was August 14, 1943, and four days and three nights had passed since I escaped from L'École de Travail in Paris. I had traveled three hundred

twelve miles by train, by bicycle, on foot and by bus. My only meal during that time was some cookies and a piece of cheese, washed down by a few gulps of lemonade.

I saw a man walking by the plaza where I was standing and I stopped him and asked, “Pardon monsieur, savez-vous ou et le UGIF?” (Excuse me mister, do you know where the UGIF is?) He responded, “Oh, les Juifs.” He probably didn’t have any idea what the UGIF was, but the acronym (Ooo-Geef) sounded like the French word for Jews, Juifs. I realized what happened and I said yes, les Juifs. He gave me directions to find the Jews. He pointed towards a pharmacy on a corner across the street and said, “Go across that narrow street and keep going. In front of the church you’ll see a bunch of kids playing. There’s a lot of kids there. They’re all Jewish. You go over there, you’ll find it.”

I crossed the street and entered the narrow Rue de la République by the pharmacy. To this day, there is still a pharmacy on that corner. Beaulieu-sur-Dordogne is a medieval city that was built on the Dordogne River in the Corrèze department of the Limousin region of Central France. The buildings along the Rue de la République are typical medieval structures, with timber frames highlighting their facades. I continued down the street until I spotted a bunch of kids in a small plaza behind the church where the Rue Thiers and the Place de la Bridolle merged. The kids were watching two boys fighting. One boy was on the ground and the other one was on top, pouncing on him. Those boys were brothers, John and Paul Levie. They may have been fighting that day, like brothers are apt to do, but I learned that they loved each other very much. I eventually got to know John and Paul much better than that brief first encounter, and the three of us spent the next four years together in France as close as brothers, trying to survive and watching each other’s back, and we became lifelong friends.

The Éclaireurs Israelites de France (“EIF”) is the French Jewish scouting movement, founded by Robert Gamzon in 1923. The EIF rescued thousands of Jews in France during World War II. I was one of the Jewish children that they rescued. Unlike the Boy Scouts of America, there was no single country-wide scouting association in France, but instead there were several different associations. The different associations were divided largely on religious lines; Catholic, Protestant and Jewish, and there were some secular groups. Like it did with other Jewish organizations in France, the Vichy government forced the EIF to join the UGIF, where it became the young person’s department of that



organization. After the deportation of the Jews of France began in 1942, the EIF established a social service that evolved into a rescue organization. It supplied Jewish children with forged identity papers, placed them in safe homes, or moved them out of France. The EIF had a large presence in the south of France, including Beaulieu-sur-Dordogne, where my odyssey had now taken me.<sup>17</sup>

I went over to one of the boys who was cheering on the fighting brothers and I asked him where I could find somebody who was in charge. He pointed out a building and said, “You go over there. See Monsieur Gordin.” The neighborhood was dominated by the Church of the Abbey Sainte-Pierre de Beaulieu. The south portal of the church was decorated with an elaborately carved stone tympanum that faced the Place du Marché. There was a series of buildings in the Place du Marché and I found Monsieur Jacob Gordin in one of them. Monsieur Gordin and his wife Rachel ran this particular enclave for Jewish children in hiding. I gave him this abbreviated version of my story: “I was sent over from Châteauroux. I am originally from L’École de Travail in Paris, and I ran away from there. I went to Poitiers and Châteauroux and I was told in Châteauroux to come here, and that someone would be waiting for me by the bus.” Monsieur Gordin looked at me and he said, “I don’t know anything about that, but you can stay here. There’s mostly young kids over here from five years old, but there’s a few your age.” He then pointed out the facilities to me, all of which were near the Church: “This is the Bureau, and then this building here is the dining room, and this building is for the little girls, the young little girls, and this building is for the big girls, and this building is for the boys.” He told me that at night, after I finished eating dinner, I was to go to the building for the boys, and then walk up one flight of stairs where I would find a dorm with all of the boys, bunks and blankets. He told me to make myself comfortable, and I said okay.

When I finished my conversation with Monsieur Gordin it was close to dinner time, so I went to the dining room. They served vegetable broth, vegetables and chestnuts for dinner. I liked the chestnuts. Everyone was also entitled to a piece of bread. Once again, just like at Rue Lamarck and at L’École de Travail, the bread was cut with a knife and carefully weighed on a scale to ensure that you received your appropriate ration, and then the portion of bread was handed over to you. After dinner, I went outside and played with the other kids in the courtyard. I learned that because this refuge was run by the EIF, I was

going to be part of a boy scout troop and a boy scout patrol. We were going to go out for walks in the woods and put on plays to keep busy. As night fell, everybody started going to the dorm to go to sleep. I climbed the steps to the boys' dorm and I saw the boys washing up and then laying down on the floor to sleep. There were about a dozen boys in the dorm. It was a huge room and in the middle of the room there were a bunch of unoccupied metal bunk beds with mattresses and blankets. I wondered why the boys were sleeping on the floor when there were so many empty beds available. I said to myself, "well, they like to sleep on the floor, I like to sleep in a bed." I picked out a bed and I asked all of the boys, "Anybody want this bed?" They said, "You want the bed, take the bed," and they were laughing. I wondered why they were laughing. Then I laid down on the bed. About five minutes after laying down, I started itching and scratching. I looked at my body and saw that I was covered from head to toe with bed bugs. They were eating me alive. I was swollen and had red spots all over me. All the boys were watching me and laughing. My initiation into the group was over. I wiped the bed bugs off and I picked out a piece of floor to sleep on like everybody else. Amidst all of the horrors that we were living through together, there was time for some humor.

I realized that all of the kids who were sleeping on the floor in that remote town in France were in the same boat as me. Their parents had been deported and they were being hidden by the EIF. I learned that Beaulieu-sur-Dordogne was more or less a safe haven for Jews, and that the people who lived there and the Town officials, even the Police Chief, were protecting us from being arrested and deported. I later learned that the local government issued me a new ration book, which was held by the administrators of the refuge. Today there is a plaque on the building in front of the small plaza where I first saw John and Paul Levie. It reads (translated from the original French):

Here, From 1939 to 1944  
In Beaulieu Sur Dordogne  
Refugee Children and Children Fleeing The Occupied Zone Were  
Saved From Deportation and Murder  
In this Colony, organized by the Jewish Scouts of France and  
directed by Monsieur and Madame Gordin,  
Thanks to the help and devotion of many people who lived in the

Belloc-Saint-Clamens commune,  
Among them, Adrienne Laquieze, Righteous Among the Nations

### C. *RADIO LONDRES*

There was a laundry and once a week I was given a clean pair of socks and a shirt, and they'd take the soiled ones back. I never got back the same clothes, and the socks never matched either. In the morning I cleaned up and then headed for the dining room. All the children of all ages ate together. Breakfast consisted of a bread ration and vegetable broth, and some chestnuts. After breakfast they told us to go outside in the plaza next to the church. We were told not to wander off, and to stay in the plaza. Lunch was the same as breakfast, maybe a few more vegetables in the broth, a few more chestnuts, and the same bread ration. Dinner was the same meal, but with even more vegetables. The meals were not too exciting, but they filled my stomach. Nobody complained that there wasn't enough to eat.

When we were not hanging out in the plaza we went out on Jewish Boy Scout patrols. After breakfast we went hiking in the woods in the countryside. They taught us songs and games to play, and then we returned to town. Every day was more or less the same, until one day one of the leaders told me and the other older boys that they felt we should learn a trade. They had made arrangements with the blacksmith in town to teach us the basics about tool and die making. I went to the blacksmith's shop every day with John and Paul Levie and the other older boys. The blacksmith was a very nice gentleman. He was a Frenchman, but with an Italian sounding name that I can't remember. We spent several hours a day in his store. He had a long bench along the wall. He had put about six vises with all the tools there for the students, and his blacksmith furnace was further in the back. It was a very large room, and quite spacious. He made architectural wrought iron for fences. He also made horseshoes for the farms in the area. He taught us what all the tools of his trade were. He explained the different types of files, when to use them, and how to sharpen them and put the correct angle on the sharp edge. He also taught us how to hold and use a hacksaw. Each one of us was given a block of steel to face off, which meant that we had to file it down to create a face that was level and straight.

The blacksmith was very instructive. But we learned other things in his shop in Beaulieu-sur-Dordogne. He was an avid listener of Radio

Londres, which was broadcast from London by the Free French who had escaped to England. It was prohibited to listen to Radio Londres, which broadcast coded messages in French to the French Resistance. Nevertheless, sometimes he would tell us to put down our tools and he would say, "Let's go listen to Radio Londres." I asked him, "Don't you need a big antenna to pick up London?" He answered, "Yeah, I have one. Come on, I'll show you." So we all went in the backyard, where his wife had lines of laundry. The blacksmith told us, "One of these laundry lines is an antenna." He turned on the radio and we heard, "Ici Londres" ("Here's London"). "Les Français parlent aux Français" ("The French speak to the French"). The radio played La Marseillaise. Sometimes General de Gaulle would speak. And then they would read codes, stupid sounding things like "la vache est bleu" ("the cow is blue"), or "la lune et tombe" ("the moon has fallen"). They were codes for orders instructing the French Resistance to do certain things in various parts of France. Everybody knew they were codes; it was no secret. Hearing the codes for myself gave me a glimmer of hope that there were people who were working to free me.

One day the blacksmith sat down to tell me and all of the other boys something. He said to us, "Listen. Try to learn as well as you can because things may be tough for you. If you're going to be hidden, or something, if you have a trade you will know what to do." And he said, "If I can give you a bit of advice, if things go bad, you must run away and do something." "One thing you must know," he told us, "Don't go to the Red Cross. The Red Cross will sit you down, they will feed you, they will put a meal in front of you, you will never be able to finish that meal, because the minute you start eating, they're on the phone with the Germans and in the middle of the meal there, you're going to be arrested." He said, "If you are really desperate, go to the Salvation Army, but never go the Red Cross." He explained that the Salvation Army was less infiltrated by collaborators.

The blacksmith from Beaulieu-sur-Dordogne was a good man. He was not Jewish, but he was helping a group of children he knew were Jewish. We were not wearing yellow stars; nobody in hiding in Beaulieu-sur-Dordogne wore a yellow star. I think that the whole town knew we were Jewish. But they were helping us. This, too, gave me some hope.



## D. *THE DOCUMENT FORGERS*

One day we were told that we were going to go on a camping trip. Our destination was the Montagne Noire, which is about one-hundred sixty miles southeast of Beaulieu-sur-Dordogne. “The Black Mountain” is situated at the southern extremity of the Massif Central, which is an elevated region in the middle of southern France, consisting of mountains and plateaus. It is close to the Mediterranean coast. They told us that it was going to be cold up at the campsite, and we were issued blankets for our backpacks. We were also told to take newspapers with us to use as insulation against the cold. We were put on a truck that ran on syngas and we drove for hours until we reached the campsite up in the mountains.

The camp was used by the Éclaireurs de France, the EdF, which was a secular group of boy scouts. We were told before we left Beaulieu-sur-Dordogne that we were going to pretend we were members of the secular EdF, even though we were Jewish scouts. We were instructed to fly the flag of the EdF on our flagpole. They taught us to sing the EdF anthem when we raised the flag. At night we sat around big bonfires and sang, but we knew that we could not to sing any songs with Hebrew words or Jewish content, and that we had to stick instead with secular songs. There were already people there when we arrived, including boys and girls. The camp was on the top of a mountain in a huge clearing surrounded by woods. There were flagpoles at the entrance. My group was put in the center on the right in the woods. I picked a spot on the ground, cleared an area about the size of my body, padded the spot with the newspapers, and then took the blanket and made a sleeping bag by folding the blanket over and then under. I could slip into the makeshift sleeping bag and then take the top and pull it over to cover my head. I slept in my clothes, but I took my shoes and socks off. Each of us was sheltered under the canvas sheet of one-half of a double tent, which was called a shelter half. We took our water from a stream in the woods. We were issued blue pills to disinfect the water in our cups and canteens. When we drank the water, our teeth and tongues turned ink blue and we used to laugh about that. The laundry was picked up once a week and taken to a town to be washed. There was a kitchen in the building at the entrance to the camp and we went there with our plates and utensils and were given our meals. We kept busy at the camp, singing songs and putting on sketches. I recognized one girl and went over to talk with her. She was the niece of the Director of L’École de Travail.

We spent several weeks on the mountain, but fall was turning into winter and it became too cold to stay. We packed up and returned to Beaulieu-sur-Dordogne. When we got back to town, we learned why we went camping in the mountains. One or more of the organizations that were working to save Jewish children was trying to sneak children into Switzerland. We heard that some groups of children that made the journey to the French/Swiss frontier succeeded in crossing the border. But we also heard that another group was not so fortunate. We were told that two girls and a boy, about fifteen and sixteen years old, crossed the border but they were arrested by the Swiss border patrol who then turned them over to the Germans in France. After that incident, any plans to try to get my friends and me into Switzerland were abandoned because it was not safe.

We also learned when we returned to Beaulieu-sur-Dordogne that we could not stay there any longer. It was not safe for us to be there anymore. The Town could not continue to protect us and we had to go into hiding. Every Jewish boy was going to be hidden. I was going to be given a false name, and it would be written on my ration coupon book. Birth places were chosen from a list of cities and towns that had been bombed and where the birth records might not be available anymore. We were going to be hidden in trade schools run by the French government that were located throughout France. Some of the schools were called Pétain schools, named after the Vichy leader. We had to pretend that we were gentiles.

I was taken into a small room that was next to the boys' dorm. There were three or four fellows in that room who were busy washing ration books, which were the identification papers for children. I watched them work. They used one half of a potato to absorb and lift the ink from the stamp of the issuing municipality. Then they bleached out the information that was going to be altered. When the ration book was dry the false name and birth place were written in, and the ink that was on the potato was used to replace the stamp that had been lifted. The EIF leaders put me in a room with John and Paul Levie. We were told that the three of us were going to stay together in hiding. John and Paul were German Jews with heavy German accents and their French was not very good; in fact, they could hardly speak French. I was to help them and make sure that they didn't get stuck with the French language. Ironically, John and Paul were from Saarwellingen, Germany, which is just thirty-six miles east of Metz. They escaped to France from Germany with their father,

Waldemar, their mother, Anna, and their younger brother, Freddy. Like my family, the Levies didn't get far enough away from the madness that enveloped Europe.

In order to have any chance to survive in my homeland, I had to forsake my family name and my Jewish religion. Jean Szklarz disappeared. I became Jean Saule, an orphan from Orléans.

## *CHAPTER VIII*

### *TOULOUSE*

#### *A. TONNEINS*

John Levie's forename in German was Hans. He became Jean Rudefleuve. Paul Levie became Paul Rudefleuve. I took my only possession, my music book from Ligugé, and the three of us boarded a train at Beaulieu-sur-Dordogne with one of the EIF leaders. The train took us to the city of Moissac, which is located about ninety miles southwest of Beaulieu-sur-Dordogne. The EIF was operating out of buildings that were located near the confluence of the Tarn and Garonne rivers at the Canal de Garonne. We were going to be assigned to a trade school and then taken there from Moissac by a member of the EIF. We walked the short distance from the railroad station to one of the EIF buildings. We spent the night and left the next day for the town of Tonneins. It was November 1943. Although I didn't know it at that time, I would return to Moissac one year later, when it became my home for the last three years that I lived in France.

Tonneins is located about sixty miles northwest of Moissac. It is situated near the Garonne river in the Lot-et-Garonne department of southwest France. Our escort from the EIF was named Noe. Noe was about eighteen or nineteen years old. He was one of the older boys in the EIF who helped to take care of the young Jewish boys in hiding. He was a member of a dedicated bunch of boys from the EIF who really stuck their necks out to help out boys like me. They risked their lives to be our surrogate older brothers and take us around and look after us. They were wonderful. I could not have survived without the help that I received from Noe and the other boys who were working in the EIF.

We took the train from Moissac to Tonneins. When we arrived we walked with Noe to the school. John, Paul and I signed in and then



Noe left. The school taught tool and die making. Somebody in the office looked me over. I was a really skinny little thing at the time. He said to me, ‘You know, there is another school nearby in another town and they are looking for jockeys to ride race horses. Would you be interested in learning to be a jockey?’ I was not interested in his proposal, and I knew that I could not be separated from John and Paul. I told him, ‘No, I wouldn’t want to do that.’ He said “Okay,” and instructed the three of us to go to the supply room.

Other students were lining up in front of a counter at the supply room. I got on the line with John and Paul. Paul was in front of me, and John was behind me. Two other students cut the line and got between Paul and me.. When Paul got to the counter they asked him for his name. He answered, “Paul” and then he froze. The person behind the counter asked him, “Tu connais pas ton nom?”, which meant, “Don’t you know your name?” Paul was looking and looking and he turned to his brother John. I saw that they could not remember their alias surname, it just escaped them. I yelled out, “Hey, Rudefleuve, avancer,” which meant, “Go ahead, Rudefleuve, move, move the line.” Paul said that his name was Paul Rudefleuve, and the line moved. I was issued a mattress bag with ties sewn into it, a sheet, a pillow, a blanket, a towel and a pair of gym shorts. I took the mattress bag to a barn where there were stacks of straw and I filled it up, tied it off, flattened it out and then put it on a bunk in the dormitory.

After we made our beds, they explained to us which classes we were supposed to attend. There was the metal shop and a drafting shop, and they explained to us what those classes were going to consist of. We were told that we would get up at six o'clock in the morning and put on our gym shorts. There was a huge field in the back of the school. They said, "The first thing you do, everybody runs around the field, and then when you come back to the field on the other side of the dorm, there's a big water tower with a chain outside, and you pull the chain and it's going to be warm water for you to shower." Maybe the first three or four guys got warm water. Everything after that was frozen water. John and Paul went through the cold shower. They were brave. I didn’t want to go through that icy shower outside in the cold dawn air. I made sure that I was the last boy on the shower line, then I backed up towards the field. When the other boys were finished showering, I returned to the dormitory and pretended that I had showered. I got dressed and went to the dining room. There was a huge cauldron in a fireplace where they cooked, yet

again, broth with vegetables. And as you walked in there was a guy with a knife, a scale and a loaf of bread. Once again, the bread was cut and your ration was carefully weighed to ensure that you received just the right amount of grams. After breakfast we went to class. The class was interesting, but John, Paul and I were not in Tonneins long enough to learn anything about tool and die making.

## **B.     *THE SERGEANT***

Not long after he took us to Tonneins, Noe returned. He found me and asked me, “Where are Paul and John?” I pointed and told him, “Over there.” Noe then told the three of us, “We have to leave right now. If you have anything in your bedroom, leave it there. Do not go back to your room. Don’t talk to anybody. Let’s leave. We’re going to the railroad station right now.” We walked away from the school in Tonneins and went straight to the railroad station. When we got to the station, Noe explained what was going on. He told us that we had to leave the school because the cook at the school suspected that there were some Jewish children hidden in the school. He called the French police and denounced us. The police were going to come to the school at midnight when we were asleep and arrest us. Noe knew about this plot because the cook had an assistant cook. Unbeknownst to the cook, his assistant was an eighteen-year-old Jewish boy who was also hidden at the school. The assistant cook contacted the EIF and tipped them off. Noe was dispatched to get us out of there. Noe told us that we were going to be placed in another school in Toulouse. We boarded a train for Toulouse in the evening. My cherished music book from Ligugé was left behind in the dormitory.

The train stopped en route to Toulouse. The conductor came around and he shouted, “Everybody off the train.” An allied air raid had damaged the tracks near Toulouse. The train could not continue until the damage was repaired. The train had stopped near a village which had a station with a waiting room. All the passengers disembarked and we walked alongside the track a short distance to the waiting room. The waiting room was one big room with benches against three of the walls. Noe, John, Paul and I sat in the middle of the bench that was against the back wall. Other passengers sat to our left and to our right. The door to the waiting room was in front of us.

We sat in the waiting room for hours and hours. In the middle of

the night, around two o'clock in the morning, the doors of the waiting room opened. A big German Sergeant, at least six-foot-tall, entered the room accompanied by three German soldiers with their Mauser rifles in their hands. The Sergeant was wearing a breast plate worn as a symbol of rank that was hung from a decorative chain around his neck. The breast plate was emblazoned with a single word: "Feldgendarmerie." This indicated that the Sergeant was a member of the German army military police. He barked out one word when he entered the waiting room: "Papiers." We had our ration books, but they had been washed. Those forged identity papers were all we had. We were stuck. We couldn't run out of there. The Sergeant started on the right side of the room. One by one, the passengers dutifully presented the Sergeant with their respective identity papers. Then he got to me. I handed him my ration book, and he looks at it, and he looks at me, he looks at it, and he's holding it, he's not giving it back to me. Then he goes to John, "Papiers." John handed him his ration book. The Sergeant did the same thing. He looks, looks. And I could see the Sergeant's face turning pale. Then he goes to Paul and Paul hands him his ration book. And the Sergeant's face is turning paler and paler. Now he is holding our three ration books. This was not the procedure that he used when he checked the other passengers in the room. He steps back a little bit and he is looking at us. He's staring at us for a minute or two. He's looking, looking. Then he comes back to me. He gives me my ration book, then he gives John and Paul their ration books. He didn't ask Noe for his identity papers. Instead, the Sergeant turned to his three soldiers and said, "Let's go, we're leaving here." They left the waiting room without checking the identity papers of any of the remaining passengers.

Noe, John, Paul and I discussed what had happened. We agreed that the Sergeant must have known that our ration books were forgeries. He just backed off and left us alone. Towards morning we were told that we could board the train and continue on our journey to Toulouse.

### **C. *CENTRE BAYARD***

Toulouse is the capital city of the southwestern French department of Haute-Garonne. The city lies on the banks of the River Garonne, 93 miles from the Mediterranean Sea and 420 miles from Paris. Toulouse is near the Pyrenees mountain range which separates France from Spain. The railroad station in Toulouse is located

in what was, in November of 1943, the northern outskirts of the city. The ancient city, nicknamed *la Ville Rose* ("the Pink City") because of the pinkish terracotta bricks used to construct many of the buildings, was located to the south of the station. Farmland spread out in the northern area where the station was located. Noe, Paul, John and I emerged from the station and turned right. We walked on a road past the railroad yard about three quarters of a mile to the Route de Launaguet where our new hiding place, the Centre Bayard, was located. Noe reminded us once again to keep our covers and not tell anyone that we were Jewish. We assumed that there were other Jewish boys at the school, but we didn't know for sure when we arrived. Noe took us to the office of the school to sign in and then he left. Occasionally, Noe and other members of the EIF would come by and check on us and the other Jewish boys who were hidden at the Centre Bayard. Sometimes they gave us a few francs for spending money, not much, but enough to pay to see a movie in town. When I registered at Centre Bayard I was issued a school uniform consisting of a worn and tattered pair of pants, a shirt and a waist length jacket. The jacket had the emblem of Centre Bayard sewn on it. I told one of the Éclaireurs, "I've got a problem. It's getting cold, and I need some warmer pants." He said, "I'll take care of it, I'll get you something." Several weeks later he returned with brand new pairs of blue knicker pants for me and for the other Jewish boys. He said that they were made out of some surplus French Army khaki uniform fabric. The fabric was dyed blue and tailored in one size. If you were skinny you tightened the belt up to make the pants fit. We were grateful to have nice warm new pants. Nobody ever questioned why some of us were wearing new pants.

Centre Bayard was a trade school that was run by the French government. It was a very large two story stone building that was old and in poor condition. There were other buildings on the lot that were in disrepair and where the roofs had caved in. There were no toilets in the main building; we used the dilapidated structures as outhouses. All of the classrooms, the kitchen, a shower room and a large dining room were located on the ground floor. Upstairs was one huge dormitory for all of the boys who were staying there, with cots pushed up against the walls. There were also a few private bedrooms for some of the teachers who slept there and were supervising the students, including the administrator, Monsieur Kraft. There was no electricity in the dormitory. At night, rats would scurry around the floor and over our



beds while we slept. The school had a large vegetable garden and we had a lot of potatoes, carrots, beets and other vegetables to eat for our meals. Potatoes were available year round. They were stored in a large pit in the barn. And at every meal there was the ever present scale and knife that were used to weigh the exact bread ration that you were entitled to.

The Director of Centre Bayard was Monsieur Bepmale. He greeted us at the office and then referred us to his second in command, Monsieur Kraft. Monsieur Kraft ran all of the events and the activities at the school. Monsieur Lacoste was the mathematics teacher. Monsieur Labite was in charge of the woodworking shop. The school offered classes in menuiserie -- which is carpentry -- mathematics, basket weaving, gardening, drafting, saddlery, shoemaking and electrical wiring. Monsieur Kraft asked me if I had a preference on what trade I wanted to learn. Because the school didn't have tool and die making, like I had been learning at Beaulieu-sur-Dordogne, I chose woodworking. I also took some classes in saddlery, but woodworking was my main trade. Toulouse was then and it still is the center of the aviation industry in France. Many of the teachers at Centre Bayard were pilots in the French air force and they had been demobilized after France was defeated by Germany. Monsieur Bepmale was a navigator. The story about him was that he was the navigator on the first plane that flew from France to South America over the Andes mountains. Monsieur Lacoste was a fighter pilot and sometimes he wore the high button shoes that the fliers wore. I studied fractions and algebra with Monsieur Lacoste. My woodworking teacher, Monsieur Labite, owned a shop with his brother in Toulouse and they manufactured skis. Monsieur Labite taught the basics of a woodworking shop, including how to mark the lumber, how to use the saws, chisels and wood planes. He was really very good.

There was a flag pole in front of Centre Bayard. Every morning before breakfast Monsieur Kraft would blow a whistle and all of the students, about 50-60 boys, had to report outside for about one half hour of exercise, rain or shine. Monsieur Kraft had a special assignment for me. When we were finished with exercising, we had to form a big circle around the flag pole to raise the French flag and sing the national anthem of Vichy France, "Maréchal, nous voilà!," which paid homage to Marshal Pétain. We were not allowed to sing La Marseillaise. I was assigned the task of raising the flag every morning and lowering it every evening. The repulsive words of the totalitarian regime are burned into my memory.

Here are some of the verses:

Maréchal, nous voilà!  
Marshal, here we are!

Une flame sacrée  
A sacred flame

Monte du sol natal  
Rises from our native soil

Et la France enivrée  
And enraptured France

Te salue Maréchal!  
Salutes you, Marshal!

Tous tes enfants que t'aime  
All your children who love you

Et vénèrent tes ans  
And venerate your years

A ton appel supreme  
Have answered your supreme appeal

Ont répondu "Présent"  
By saying "Here"

Maréchal, nous voilà!  
Marshal, here we are!

Devant toi, le sauveur de la France  
Before you, the saviour of France

Nous jurons, nous, tes gars  
We, your boys, all swear

De server et de suivre tes pas

To serve you and follow your path

Maréchal, nous voilà!  
Marshal, here we are!

Tu nous as redonné l'espérance  
You have given us back the hope

La Patrie renâitra!  
That the Country will be reborn!

Maréchal, Maréchal, nous voilà!  
Marshal, Marshal, here we are!

Some of the boys would add obscenities to the song. They would sing “Maréchal” and then continue with the words “tête le cheval” -- horse head -- and then add a little curse word afterwards. When we were finished with that charade it was time to go to our classes.

#### **D.     *SHOWERS, SILVERWARE, ONION SOUP AND MENUISERIE***

The shower room was fitted with a water pipe with valves spaced approximately eight feet apart, which was attached to the perimeter walls above our heads. When the valves were opened, water sprayed out of pin holes that were drilled into the pipe. Hot water was supplied by a coal furnace and boiler that was in the kitchen. We had been told that there were other Jewish boys in the school. At first we didn't know who they were, but it didn't take long to figure it out. Group showers could be problematic, because all of the Jewish boys were circumcised. The boys solved the problem. At least two Jewish boys would be the first ones to go down to the shower room. They made sure that the fire was stoked in the furnace that heated the water for the showers. When the water was very hot and the temperature gauge was nearly in the red zone, they would run into the shower room and open up all of the valves. The hot water steamed up the room and no one could see anything. Just to be extra cautious, we washed up while facing the wall, and then wrapped our

waists with a towel that was hung on the wall. We did that every day that I was at the Centre Bayard.

The EIF was bringing more and more Jewish boys to Centre Bayard. One day I saw a fellow I knew from the EIF arrive with two boys. I went over to talk to them and was told that the boys were brothers and that they were going to be checking into the school. The Éclaireur gave the brothers their ration books to turn in to the office, and then he paused and asked to see the books. He looked at the books and he was taken aback. He said that they had just done the papers but they had made a mistake. The forged ration books showed that the birth dates of the brothers were just six months apart and they could not be turned in to the office at the same time. The Éclaireur turned to one of the brothers and said, "Here, you turn yours in and I'll be back in a couple of days. I'll fix the other one." He returned in two days with the corrected ration book. The brothers' real names were Joseph and Wolf Lautenberg. Some of the other Jewish boys at Centre Bayard were Freddy Gross and Harry Baum. Those are their real names. At some point another Jewish boy who was slightly older than the rest of us came to Centre Bayard. His real name was Henri Milsztajn (Milstein). Henri Milstein was with the EIF. I remember that he was blind in one eye and he wore eye glasses. He was a talented musician and performing artist and his job at Centre Bayard was to organize the students into a chorale to sing and to put on sketches and plays. I enjoyed learning how to sing and perform from Henri Milstein; he was a very nice and knowledgeable gentleman.

When I was attending sculpture class in Paris at the Rue Claude Bernard I had watched another boy learning carpentry through a window in the classroom. One day this boy walked into the Centre Bayard and signed in as a student in the office. I instantly recognized him, but he didn't know who I was and I didn't know his name. After he signed in he started to mingle with me and the other students. Despite our strict orders not to blow our covers, I called him aside and said, "Let's go in the corner, I want to talk to you." He agreed. I told him, "I know you." He said, "You don't know me." I said, "Sure, I know you. I remember you." He said, "No, you don't." I said, "Listen, don't get excited. I know you're Jewish and I'm Jewish too, and I remember you. At Rue Claude Bernard, you were in the woodworking shop, because I used to watch you in the class and I remember your face." He said okay, and I was formally introduced to who would become one of my dearest friends, Henri "Lynx" Kirschenbaum. His cover name was Henri Baudoin. He didn't



get his nickname, “Lynx,” until about a year later but I will call him Lynx now. Lynx told me that things were getting bad in Paris. His parents were deported and he was living at home with his sisters. He was told that he had to get out of Paris. He knew a fellow from the French Resistance in Paris, and he went to him and told him that he needed a place to hide and that he had to get out of Paris. The EIF was running the school at the Rue Claude Bernard. The EIF had an underground resistance cell that was called “La Sixième [The Sixth] of the EIF.” They provided Lynx with a false identity and forged identity papers. He took the train from Paris to Toulouse to hide in the Centre Bayard.

Although Centre Bayard had plenty of potatoes and other vegetables for us to eat, it didn’t have enough silverware to go around. There was a scramble to get a seat in the dining room with a complete place setting. Lynx made sure that nobody grabbed his silverware. He would run into the dining room with the rest of us and secure a place setting with silverware. He then stood up on the bench and announced to the assembly, “Look everybody.” Lynx then proceeded to lick his fork, spoon and plate and then put them back on the table. Nobody would touch his place setting after that.

Students who were not Jewish were also enrolled at Centre Bayard. I remember one in particular. His name was Costes. He was a little guy, like me, and I used to talk to him occasionally. Costes told me that his father was an officer in the French Colonial Army in Marrakech in North Africa and that he was born there. His father sent him to Centre Bayard to learn a trade. John and Paul Levie were concerned about Costes and they spoke to me about him. They told me, “We’re in trouble.” I asked the brothers, “What’s the trouble?” They said, “Costes came to us and said, ‘I believe you two guys are Jews. I’m going to call the police.’ And then he walked away.” I told John and Paul, “Let me talk to him.” A couple of hours later I saw Costes and said, “Costes, come over.” I put my arm around him. I said, “Let’s go for a walk.” So we walked. I said, “Costes, you know, you tell a lot of stories, don’t you, about your father, about North Africa, he’s so far away.” I continued, “You know, Costes, I have a funny suspicion that you’re a dirty Jew [sale Juif].” He was stunned and asked me, “Why do you say that?” I responded, “You’re telling me stories and I don’t believe them. You tell me about your father in North Africa. We’re not in North Africa, we’re in Toulouse. How do I know these stories are true?” I told Costes, “You know, I think you’re a hidden Jew in this place here.” Costes protested

and said “I’m not Jewish.” I told him, “You look Jewish and the stories that you have been telling me, they don’t sound right to me.” And I let it go like that. After that, Costes never said anything again to John and Paul threatening to denounce them as Jews.

Centre Bayard had a cook and all of the students had to pull some duty in the kitchen to help out, either by assisting the cook with the preparation of the meals or washing the dishes and scrubbing the pots. Sometimes there was some food stuck to the bottom of the pots and you could scoop it out with a spoon and eat it before washing the pots. The cook was an interesting young man. He was the son of a farmer who had a farm behind Centre Bayard. The farmer had many children, all boys. The farmer named all of his boys in numerical order, in French, Un, Deux, Trois, Quatre, Cinq, Six, Sept, et cetera. The cook’s name was either Cinq or Six. Several times when I was in the kitchen he asked me to help him to make onion soup. I cut up lard and melted it in a big black frying pan. The pan was never washed; it was just wiped down after it was used. I then cut up onions and fried them until they were caramelized in the frying pan. While the onions were frying I filled a large pot of water and brought it to a boil on the stove. The first time that I helped to make the soup the cook told me when it was time to put the onions in the boiling water. I proceeded to spoon them out of the frying pan and put them into the boiling water. The cook admonished me, “That’s not how you do it.” He instructed me to lift the frying pan and dip it into the pot with the boiling water. I protested, “But the pan is dirty, it’s black.” He told me, “It’s okay, that’s what gives the color to the onion soup.” I ate the soup even though I was privy to the unsavory recipe.

Between breakfast and lunch I attended Monsieur Labite’s menuiserie and drafting class. John Levie and Lynx also took that class. Paul Levie took basket weaving. We didn’t have any machinery and learned by using hand tools. First we were taught how to use a saw. For hours and hours we would practice the same sawing movement without actually cutting through a piece of lumber. Monsieur Labite wanted us to get the feel of how to use the saw. He did the same thing when he introduced us to the wood plane. For hours and hours, we would move the plane back and forth – always with a straight motion, never crooked - - over a piece of wood but without doing any shaving. Monsieur Labite taught us how to sharpen the plane, how to set the plane, how to make the shavings, and how to dress a piece of raw lumber by hand to get the right thickness. In drafting class we learned how to draw a full scale design of

every joint and angle that we would learn how to cut. He was an excellent teacher. I have always remembered everything that Monsieur Labite taught me about menuiserie and drafting at Centre Bayard.

## *E. THE CART*

In addition to having me raise the flag every day, Monsieur Kraft also used me as an errand boy. Centre Bayard had a wood cart, about three feet wide and five feet long. The cart was fitted with bicycle wheels and a big handle with a grip to pull it. Once, Monsieur Kraft told me to take the cart and go to a warehouse in Toulouse to pick up some bananas for the school. I went to the warehouse and, sure enough, they loaded the cart with a bunch of bananas that were over ripe and starting to rot. The students gladly ate the donated bananas, even though they were past their prime. Another time, Monsieur Kraft gave me a sack of potatoes and told me to take the cart and deliver the sack to the Préfecture de Police in Toulouse. Monsieur Kraft also handed me a letter and instructed me to deliver the letter and the sack of potatoes to a guard at the gate. The Préfecture was a walled in police compound in the city, and I wasn't too keen on going there, but I followed Monsieur Kraft's instructions. I loaded the cart with the sack of potatoes and found my way to the Préfecture. I approached a policeman in the guardhouse and told him that I had a letter and a sack of potatoes for someone inside. The policeman looked at me and used a phone in the guardhouse to telephone the person to whom the letter was addressed. He said, "There's a young man here and he has a letter and a sack for you." He hung up the phone, he took the letter from me and he told me to take the sack and put it outside of the guardhouse. I returned to Centre Bayard and I didn't question Monsieur Kraft about what he had me do. Monsieur Kraft used me to deliver other letters to people in different parts of Toulouse. Each time, Monsieur Kraft would hand me a letter with a name on it. He would tell me where to go and he told me, "Go deliver it to that person. Make sure you get the right person and just hand the letter over to him." Each time, I would knock on the door, announce that I had a letter, and then I delivered the letter. I never asked Monsieur Kraft about those letters. I didn't know what was in the letters; I was asked to run errands, so I ran the errands. It never dawned on me until I left Toulouse what I was doing.

The region around Toulouse was a constant target for the Allied air forces. From the first week that I arrived at Centre Bayard, there were

regular aerial bombing raids. The school was adjacent to a huge railroad yard. The Germans had placed anti-aircraft guns throughout the railroad yard. During one of the daytime air raids, the sky was filled with what looked like hundreds of bombers, wing tip to wing tip. The anti-aircraft guns fired relentlessly at the planes. The planes were being shot down like flies as the anti-aircraft guns couldn't miss. When the planes were hit they would drop, and then you'd see white mushroom-like parachutes open up and drift down to the ground. The Germans also had machine guns spread around the railroad yard and they would shoot and kill the airmen as they parachuted to the ground.

Although Centre Bayard was never hit by a bomb, the shells from the anti-aircraft guns would burst in the air and pieces of sharp shrapnel, which were chunks of steel with razor sharp edges, sometimes rained down on the school. I was caught in an air raid about ten minutes after I left Centre Bayard to go to Toulouse on an errand. The sirens blared and I could hear the roar of the approaching bombers. Then the anti-aircraft guns started blasting away. There was a drainage gutter alongside the road. I went into the gutter, turned the cart upside down and placed it over me. Some chunks of shrapnel bounced off of the cart, but I stayed curled up underneath the cart for 20-30 minutes until the air raid was over. Then I righted the cart and continued on to Toulouse to complete my errand. That cart probably saved my life.

Some of the other boys and I talked about the bombing raids. We had heard that people took shelter in their basements, and they perished when the building was hit and collapsed into the basement. Centre Bayard didn't have a basement or an air raid shelter. We just stayed in our beds during an air raid, or we stood in the doorways and moved from doorway to doorway and watched what was happening outside. During one of the night raids, a bomber crashed on the edge of the school's property. Although there was a curfew and we were not allowed outside the building, several boys, including me, ran over to the crash site to see if we could help anybody. We were close enough to the school to run back if the Germans came.

There were farms near the Centre Bayard. We had learned from one of the teachers at the school that most of the farms would provide the airmen with safe haven and would help to sneak them out through the Resistance. But we also learned that there were other farms where the farmers would prefer to get a reward from the Germans for turning in the airmen. We were told that if we found an airman, we should tell him to



go in the direction of the good farms that were connected with the Resistance, and to avoid the farms that would turn them in to the Germans. We knew the directions for the good farms and for the bad farms. Unfortunately, there was nobody alive to help at the crash site that evening. All I found were some papers with Canadian markings on them. Soon after the plane crashed, several trucks came to the crash site with a crew of men who picked up and took away all of the debris. Nothing was left on the ground; even the smallest pieces of debris were picked up.

There was one air raid that I will never forget. On a Sunday morning the air raid sirens went off. I heard the planes approaching, and there were fighter planes ahead of the bombers. The fighter planes dove on the target of the raid, leaving smoke trails behind them; then they flew off. The bombers dropped their payloads on the target. After months of raids, they finally hit something huge. There was a monstrous explosion that shook the ground and the sky turned practically black. We heard that the Allies had hit a powder factory that was located somewhere on the outskirts of Toulouse.

## *F. THE SANDALS*

Centre Bayard was located on an extensive piece of property. Occasionally, I went for a walk around the property. There were farm fields behind the school's large garden. Adjacent to the property and behind the garden there was also another school for teenage boys that was run by priests. That school had gardens that abutted Centre Bayard's property. One cold day I was walking around the perimeter of the property in the area that was near the other school. I saw a priest come outside with a young man and I stopped to watch them. The priest told the boy to take his clothes off and to kneel down in the garden. After the boy complied, the priest took a pair of clippers and shaved his hair off. The priest then took a watering can and poured it over the boy. I started yelling, "Ce que vous faites la-bas?" "What are you doing there, what are you doing to him?" The priest shouted back at me, "Get out of here."

Behind Centre Bayard's main building there was a chapel that was closed. Nobody ever used that chapel. The priest that I saw in the garden paid a visit to Centre Bayard. We were told that the priest was not happy that the chapel was not being used. He said that he would run the service, and that he expected all of us to attend mass on Sunday morning. The Jewish boys went into a panic. We didn't know what to say or what

to do at a Catholic mass, but we were stuck; we had to go to the service. I lined up and shuffled in with all of the other boys. On the left as you entered the chapel there was a basin with holy water and I saw some of the boys making the sign of the cross. When I reached the basin I was frozen with fear. I realized that I also had to make the sign of the cross, but I didn't know which hand to use and I didn't remember which hand the other boys were using. I plunged my left hand into the basin. That was a mistake. The priest slapped me and demanded to know why I was using my left hand instead of my right hand. I made up a story and told him that I was a Protestant. I didn't even know whether Protestants did or didn't make the sign of the cross when entering a church. I had no idea what went on.

When the service was over the priest announced that he wanted everybody to go to confession. I didn't know what to do in confession and my cover would be blown. I confronted the priest and spontaneously told him, "I'm not going to confession. Forget it. You're not forcing me to go to confession. I don't want to go." I was risking my cover by confronting the priest again, but I didn't have any other options. I just blurted out my objection. Some of the other boys also dissented and told the priest that they weren't going to go to confession either. The priest must have remembered me from the incident in the garden and now things between us were worse because I was defying him. He complained to either Monsieur Bepmale or Monsieur Kraft. One of them had a talk with me. I was told that the priest expected me to be punished for my conduct. I was sentenced to the loss of my shoes and socks. It was wintertime. I was also placed on trash duty which entailed taking out the trash and placing it on the trash pile on the property. Finally, I had to break up stones with a sledgehammer. The smaller stones were going to be used to construct the base layer of a new volleyball court. That was my punishment for several weeks.

I managed to mitigate the worst part of my punishment, which was being forced to walk around and work barefoot. The teacher in the saddlery shop liked the work that I did. He was a former saddler for the French Army Cavalry. He looked at my bare feet and said, "Where are your shoes?" I told him that the priest complained that I wasn't nice to him and they took away my shoes. The teacher said, "No problem." He handed me a batch of leather and said, "Make yourself a pair of sandals. Make outlines of your feet on the leather and cut it out. You know what to do. You know how to make straps and how to sew. Wear the sandals."

So I made myself a beautiful pair of nice leather sandals with straps. I finished out my punishment wearing my sandals. My handiwork was admired at Centre Bayard and soon I was helping to make sandals for whoever wanted a pair.

## G. *LE JUIF SÜSS*

We were required to attend classes Monday through Friday. After the lunch break I attended math class with Monsieur Labite, the former fighter pilot. At midafternoon we were finished for the day and had free time for games and to play basketball and volleyball. On Saturday and Sunday we were allowed to walk to Toulouse. Usually I walked to town with John and Paul. We were the “Three Musketeers.” We would walk as far as we could, look around the city, and then return to Centre Bayard. Sometimes we went to the big plaza, called the Place du Capitole, where the government offices and the opera were located. Most of the time we didn’t have any money. Occasionally we had a few francs that the EIF gave us when an Éclaireur stopped by to check on us. Whenever we had some money, we went to the movies or got ice cream. One time when we went to the movies there was a Vaudeville act before the movie. The performer was a Spanish ventriloquist and he painted his hand to look like a puppet. The puppet would say, “Its good, s’awright.” Years later I saw the same act, but with a different performer called Senor Wences, in America on the Ed Sullivan television show.

Although we didn’t have any identity papers because we had turned our ration books in when we registered at Centre Bayard, we had some sense of security when we walked to Toulouse because we wore jackets with the school’s emblem, and, if we were stopped and questioned, we could say that we were students from the Centre Bayard. Nevertheless, we had to be on the alert for any danger, such as being caught up in an air raid or in a round up by the Milice. The Milice was a paramilitary organization that was initially set up in France during the war by the Vichy government to fight the French Resistance. Its members were loyal to Marshal Petain and then to the Germans. Eventually, the role of the Milice expanded to include rounding up Jews for deportation and finding airmen who had been shot down. We had heard that a lot of the members of the Milice were criminals who were released from jail and given uniforms and weapons. We knew that the Milice were dangerous and that they were running mad through the town, trying to kill

people.

One time I went to Toulouse with John and Paul Levie and we were in the center of the city near a movie house called Les Variétés, on the Boulevard Lazare Carnot. Les Variétés ran propaganda films and at that time it was showing the virulent anti-Semitic film called "Le Juif Süß" that was produced at the request of the Nazi propaganda chief, Joseph Goebbels. The cinema was also a recruiting station for the Milice. As you came in, on the right, there was an office that housed the recruiting station.

From the street near Les Variétés we noticed that the Milice had the street blocked off. I became concerned because the Milice would check for Jews by having the males drop their pants to see if they were circumcised. I said to John and Paul, "You know, they're going to be checking everybody in that street. If they make us drop our pants, we're in trouble." So I said to them, "Let's go see the movie. We'll hide in there." We went inside the cinema. I did the talking, because John and Paul had heavy German accents. I spoke to a man in the recruiting station and said, "We're in Centre Bayard. We are for Marshal Petain and we want to join the Milice." He asked me, "How old are you?" I told him that I was fifteen and he said, "You're too young, you can't join." I said, "Okay, but you are showing a movie about the Jews. Can we go see that?" He said "Yeah, you can sit there. Go ahead, go see it." So John, Paul and I went in to watch "Le Juif Süß." The three of us were the only ones in the theatre. We sat down and watched the entire film. It was vile and disgusting. When the film was over, I told John or Paul to go to the door and take a look to see if the street was clear. He returned and said that we should watch the film once more and then look at the street again. Finally, the street was clear and we decided it was safe to head back to Centre Bayard.

There were other unexpected hazards in Toulouse. There was a complex in Toulouse that had an Olympic size swimming pool and a smaller swimming pool. When the weather warmed up in Toulouse, some of us decided to go to the piscine, as it was called in French. The large pool was open to the general public, but the smaller pool was reserved for the German army and civilians were prohibited from swimming in the smaller pool. I didn't know how to swim, so I just waded around in waist high water in the larger pool. During one of our outings at the piscine, two of my colleagues from Centre Bayard grabbed me by the arms and legs and dragged me into the area where the German



soldiers were swimming in the smaller pool. I was screaming and trying, unsuccessfully, to fight them off and free myself. They started to swing me back and forth near the pool. And I'm crying and yelling and watching the German soldiers laughing and laughing at us. Finally, the boys let go of me and I went flying into the deep end of the smaller pool. I learned how to swim instantaneously. I started moving my arms and legs and swam towards the edge of the pool. I thought to myself, "It's not so hard, I'm swimming, not sinking." I climbed out and ran to the other pool. And all the while the German soldiers were laughing their heads off. I went back to the piscine quite a few times after my first real swim.

## *H. HÔTEL-DIEU SAINT-JACQUES*

Despite our best efforts to entertain and to distract ourselves, there were constant reminders that we were in the middle of a war. Centre Bayard didn't have a radio, but some of the teachers would listen to their radios and tell us what they heard about the war. Monsieur Labite, my woodworking teacher, told us that on June 6, 1944, the Allies had landed in Normandy. We didn't know any details about the invasion, which was called Operation Overlord, but the news gave me hope that somebody was coming to liberate my family and me and that we would be reunited.

There were private homes across the street from the Centre Bayard. There was a boy our age who lived in one of those homes. He wanted to go to Centre Bayard but they wouldn't admit him. He used to come into the yard and play with us when we were on free time. One day he started to talk about proving himself, that he was a tough guy. Soon afterwards, we found out that this boy got a hold of a German hand grenade. He climbed up on the roof of the railroad station to wait for German officers to come out of the station and then kill them with the grenade. He pulled the pin on the grenade, but he waited too long to throw it and he blew himself up.

We also heard about a proclamation that all Jews in Toulouse must report for deportation. If they didn't report, their homes would be searched and if they were found inside they would be shot on the spot. The next day, I was sent on an errand into Toulouse. I noticed a lot of commotion on one of the streets, and I saw that the Milice were roaming the streets with trucks. I returned to Centre Bayard after completing my errand. The day after I returned from my errand, we received news about

what had transpired in Toulouse the previous day. The Milice were shooting Jews who were hiding in their homes and loading the bodies on trucks. They murdered a Rabbi who they found hiding in his bathtub. One of the trucks that was loaded with corpses overturned and spilled the corpses that it was carrying onto the street.

The situation in Toulouse continued to deteriorate. During the summer after the invasion of France I didn't feel well. I had abdominal pain. Monsieur Kraft told me to go to the big hospital in Toulouse, which was called Hôtel-Dieu Saint-Jacques, and see a doctor. One of the boys in the school accompanied me on the long walk. Centre Bayard was located on the northern fringe of Toulouse on the north bank of the Garonne River. The Hôtel-Dieu Saint-Jacques was located on the south bank of the Garonne River. We walked through the center of the city to, of all places, the Rue de Metz, then we crossed the Garonne on the Pont-Neuf, and walked to the Rue Viguerie where the hospital was located. The doctor examined me as soon as I arrived. He told me that I had appendicitis, and that I had to stay for an operation to remove my appendix.

During my first night in the hospital the Allies were bombing in the area. The hospital ward shook from the concussions caused by the aerial bombardment and the exploding anti-aircraft shells. The nurses were nuns. In the morning a nurse came to shave me to prepare me for surgery. I was very concerned because I was circumcised. I thought that somebody would turn me in, but it turned out that I was safe at that hospital. I was taken to the operating room and I saw that the hallways were filled with children who were wounded in the bombings. I was put to sleep for the operation with an ether anesthesia mask. When I woke up I was told that I had to stay in bed for several weeks, no walking allowed. Priests came around and asked me if I needed anything. I asked them for certain books to read and they brought them to me.

Eventually, a young doctor examined me and he told me that it was time to remove the staples that were used to close the surgical incision. When he was about to begin the procedure the air raid sirens went off and another bombing raid started. The concussions buffeted the windows in the hospital ward. Some of the windows cracked. As the doctor was removing the first staple, a strong concussion hit the windows and startled the doctor. He jumped and ripped out a piece of skin as he was trying to spread and remove the staple. The bombing continued, but the doctor removed the rest of the staples and patched up my new wound.

I was left with a scar that resembled a second navel. The nurses came into the ward and started praying. I was so scared that I started praying to myself. I used every Jewish prayer that I knew. When I was finished with the Jewish prayers, I joined in and mimicked the Catholic prayers that I overheard. I was afraid that the building was going to fall down on me.

John and Paul Levie and some of the other boys came to visit me at the hospital. And there was another fellow by the name of Charles Zimmerman who also came to see me. Charles attended a different school in Toulouse that was called the Centre de Jeunesse. He was friendly with Henri Milstein and he used to come to visit Henri at Centre Bayard. When Charles came to see me at the hospital he said, "You know, Jean, you're going to be here for quite a few weeks. Can I borrow your pants? You don't need them here. This way I can have my pants washed." I said, "Okay, you can have them." Charles happily left with the nice pair of pants that the EIF had given me. When one of the nurses alerted me that I would be able to go back to Centre Bayard soon, I told her that I didn't have any pants to wear and I had to stay. She asked me, "Where are your pants?" I told her that I lent them to somebody. She said, "Get them back." I told John or Paul Levie to find Charles Zimmerman at Centre de Jeunesse and tell him to bring back my pants. The next day, Charles showed up and he gave me his old pair of pants; he kept my new ones. I was not in any condition to argue with him at that time. When I tried to get out of the bed, I went two steps and fell down. The nurse spent several hours helping me to walk again. In a few hours I felt stronger, and one of the boys from Centre Bayard walked with me back to the school.

When I was in the hospital, one of the young priests who came to see me told me where he lived in Toulouse. I was apprehensive about the deportation order and the mayhem that the Milice was causing. I went to see the young priest. He came out of the place where he was living to see me. I said, "Well, I want to thank you for the books that you brought to me when I was in the hospital." Then, for the first time, I broke the EIF's rule; I told the young priest that I was Jewish. I said, "Things may be going bad. Would it be possible if I need to hide to come here?" He looked at me and said, "I want you to leave right now and don't ever come back."

When they were young, my children wondered why I had what looked like a second belly button. Now they know about my souvenir from the Hôtel-Dieu Saint-Jacques in Toulouse.

## ***I. THE PYRENEES***

The village of Montignac is located about one hundred and twenty miles due north of Toulouse. During the war, caves that contained prehistoric drawings on their walls were discovered near Montignac. After I returned from the hospital, the school announced that the students would be allowed to enter the Lascaux Caves to see the prehistoric drawings. I was excited about the field trip, but disappointed when I was told that I could not go because I had not fully recovered from my appendectomy and the trip would be too strenuous for me.

After the field trip a group of German soldiers came to Centre Bayard accompanied by civilian laborers. They started digging trenches in a zig-zag pattern around the property, tearing up parts of the garden along the way. They cut trenches through the middle of the garden. The trenches faced the open farm fields to the north of Centre Bayard. Then they dug holes in the roads and put cement forms into the holes. Railroad track rails that had been cut into sections were stacked on the side of the road. I asked one of the German soldiers, "What are you doing?" He explained to me that, "If the American tanks come, we will take the rails and put them on an angle into the holes in the cement forms in the road. The rails will stop the tanks from coming through." I said, "But you're going to stop traffic from coming through." He replied, "No, we're going to leave the rails on the side of the road. We will only put them into the roads if the tanks come close."

School recessed for the summer. Many of the students went home, but all of the Jewish kids and some other students, including orphans, remained at Centre Bayard. Monsieur Bepmale told us that he owned property in the Pyrenees and that he had vineyards. He said that he was going to take us to his village and we were going to help him with la vendange, the grape harvest. La vendange came early for the vineyards located on the sun-drenched hills of the Pyrenees in the Languedoc-Roussillon region of France south of Toulouse. We were all excited about the trip to Monsieur Bepmale's village in the



Pyrenees. The entourage that went included John and Paul Levie, Lynx, Joseph and Wolf Lautenberg, Freddy Gross, Harry Baum, Cinq or Six the cook, Costes, Monsieur Bepmale's daughter Josette, and Henri Milstein. We packed tents, camping gear, some food and extra clothes and took a train from Toulouse to the village. The village was located right at the base of the Pyrenees. The mountains rose up from the foothills behind the village. The view was magnificent.

Henri Milstein organized us like we were a boy scout troop. After all, he was an Éclaireur and had the scouting background. Monsieur Bepmale had a two-story family home in the middle of the village and his vineyards were behind the village. We pitched our tents and made camp in front of Monsieur Bepmale's house. The first night, he cooked us polenta for dinner. He cooked the polenta on big sheets and it was tasty. Monsieur Bepmale showed us the inside of his house. It was full of antiques, including old firearms, swords and military uniforms. All of the items were museum quality pieces and they were carefully displayed like they were in a museum.

By the time we arrived most of the grapes had been harvested from Monsieur Bepmale's vineyards. We went on walks on trails, and Henry Milstein had us put on sketches and sing songs. One day it was decided that we would all go on a long hike and do some climbing in the foothills. It was very warm and Henri Milstein said, "Let's go up in the higher elevation, maybe it will be cooler there." All the boys went, and Monsieur Bepmale's daughter Josette came along with us. We walked and climbed and then we came upon a house way up in the hills. It was a big house with a huge swimming pool in front. We rang the doorbell to ask permission to go swimming in the pool. Nobody answered the door. We looked around, but the house was shuttered and no one was there. We jumped into the swimming pool and spent the rest of the day swimming and splashing around in the Pyrenees. It was a good day.

Towards the end of our stay there, Henri Milstein decided that we would put on a show for the villagers to thank them for their hospitality in greeting us and for letting us pitch our tents in the middle of the village. There was a big hall at the local church. We made up some props and rehearsed songs that Henri Milstein taught us. He put together lyrics and music that he knew. The show was comprised of singing, acting and talking. The story was about French prisoners in Germany, and how hard their lives were as prisoners. The

whole village was invited to come and watch us. I remember fragments of one of the songs, which Henri adapted from “Le Chant des Marais” (“The Song of the Swamp or The Song of the Deported,” written by detainees of the Börgermoor concentration camp in 1933, it became the song of all deportees and victims of oppression): “Far into infinity stretch great marshy meadows where not a single bird sings...where we must constantly dig the earth...,” and “hoping for the spring to come back, and hoping that France will be free again.”

The villagers enjoyed the show and applauded our performance. We packed up after the show and returned to Toulouse. The lyric, “hoping that France will be free again,” was prescient.

## *J. THE FLAGPOLE*

When we left Toulouse it was occupied by the Germans. When we returned from our excursion to the Pyrenees, Toulouse was liberated. We walked out of the train station and saw French flags and people wearing arm bands with the Croix de Lorraine, which was the symbol of Free France and the Resistance. The Germans and the police who used to mill around were gone. We walked the short distance back to Centre Bayard. There were dead horses laying all over the streets and sidewalks, and there was one at the entrance to Centre Bayard. The Germans had finished digging the trenches that they had started before we left for the Pyrenees. There were zig zag trenches spread out across the farm fields as far as the eye could see. The Allied forces and the Free France army invaded Southern France on August 15, 1944 in what became known as Operation Dragoon. The Resistance led the battle for the liberation of Toulouse and victory was secured on August 19-20, 1944. I heard that there was a big battle between the Resistance and the Milice and the police at the Préfecture where I had once delivered a letter and a sack of potatoes. I also heard that the Resistance was looking for collaborators and members of the Milice and when they found them they were executed.

We felt good that Toulouse had been liberated, but the war was not over. The other Jewish boys and I didn’t divulge our true identities. We decided to wait for instructions from the EIF.

Monsieur Labite had some sad news for us upon our return to Centre Bayard. His brother was a member of the Resistance. He was

arrested just before we left for the Pyrenees and the Milice shot and killed him.

After school resumed, I was talking to one of the other boys about the Resistance and he told me an interesting story. He was not Jewish and he lived at home with his parents in Toulouse and attended Centre Bayard during the day. He had been asked to deliver letters to people in Toulouse. On one of his deliveries, he knocked on the door and announced that he had a letter for a certain person. He was shown inside and brought to the addressee on the letter. The man sitting behind the desk was the boy's father. He was stunned; he hadn't known that his father was in the Resistance, and the name on the letter was his father's nom de guerre. He kept his discovery a secret until after the liberation of Toulouse. I told him that I also delivered letters to people in Toulouse. Even after the liberation, I was never told that I had been delivering letters for the Resistance. I just know what I did, and what the other boy from Centre Bayard who also delivered letters told me. After the war, that boy married Monsieur Bepmale's daughter Josette.

Toulouse was festive and the people had a big victory parade. I went to see the parade with the other boys from the school. I saw a group of policemen marching in the parade and all of them were wearing arm bands with the Croix de Lorraine. I looked at them and said to the other boys, "I don't believe it, look at those guys." Before we left for the Pyrenees, the police were chasing down Jews and Allied airmen who had been shot down. Now, suddenly, they were marching like heroes in the victory parade. We all scratched our heads in disbelief.

Back at Centre Bayard we resumed our routine. We exercised in the morning and mustered to raise the flag. I was still in charge of raising the flag. Every morning for nine long months we sang "Maréchal, nous voilà!" when we raised the flag. Well, that was out and the war criminal Maréchal Petain was on his way out. We went back to the national anthem of the République, La Marseillaise. One morning, after we had just finished raising the flag, a group of partisans wearing Croix de Lorraine arm bands came into the school compound. They started to look at the flag pole and I asked one of them, "What are you going to do?" He said, "We're going to take that flag pole away. It's very tall and we need it for another place." I asked him, "How are you going to take it out?" He said, "Oh, we have a plastic charge, and we're going to blow it up at that base." I told him, "You can't do that. This is my flag pole. If you blow that thing up, it's welded together, it's just going to break up." I had

an idea. I told the partisan, “I know where there is a new flag pole. It’s laying on the ground, nobody used it. You go a couple of hundred meters along the gate by the railroad and you’ll find it there.” He sent one of his men to verify what I told him. The man returned and reported that there was a flag pole there. The partisan said, “Okay,” and they left. I saved our flag pole.

## K. *RIGHTEOUS AMONG THE NATIONS*

The first American soldier that I saw in Toulouse was a paratrooper. He was a big, big, tall guy, at least six feet tall, and he was chewing gum. He wore two forty-five caliber pistols on his belt. It was nice to see the American soldiers. I watched the military convoys pass by on the roads and I waved at the soldiers with the other boys. Sometimes the soldiers would toss cans of food rations to us as they passed. A lot of the rations were canned corn. Corn was not a staple that we were used to eating. In those days, corn was used for animal feed. So we took the cans of corn and threw them back at the trucks. French soldiers who were stationed in North Africa also passed by on their way to the front in the north of France.

Five years had passed since my family evacuated from Metz. Now there were tangible signs that this long nightmare was coming to an end. It felt good, but the war was not over yet. The situation was very uncertain because the Germans were very strong and they had a lot of equipment. We didn’t know what was going to happen. And I didn’t know where my family was. Whenever an Éclaireur came around to see us we anxiously asked him, “What are we doing? How long are we staying here?” He told us that “We’re organizing a home in Moissac. From Centre Bayard we’re going to go to the home. It’s going to be a Jewish home comprised of boys and girls from all of the hidden children.” He said, “You guys are going to go there too, but we have to wait. It’s not ready yet.” That was exciting news; a new place to live. He emphasized that we should keep our covers – “Stay the way you are. Don’t say anything until we tell you.” We were advised to resume our classes and to stick to our routine until we were told otherwise, and that’s what we did. Every time an Éclaireur came to see us we asked him, “Is the home ready yet?” And each time he answered, “No.” But he assured us that “We’ll get there, we’ll get there.” He told us that the war was not



over, but that the Americans who were fighting in France were making progress and things were going well; but we had to stay put until it was safe. To keep us happy, the EIF gave us a few more francs to spend in town. There was nothing to buy, so we spent the money on the movies, as usual. They didn't bring us any news about our families. I didn't ask any questions. There was nothing to ask. Nobody knew where their parents were. We knew that they were all deported to concentration camps. But we didn't know the truth about the concentration camps.

It happened suddenly in November of 1944, three months after the liberation of Toulouse. One of the Éclaireurs came to Centre Bayard and told us, "Okay, the home is ready, we're leaving." I'm not sure if we left that day or the next day. As soon as we received the news, the other Jewish boys and I got very excited. All of us blew our covers. I told the non-Jewish students that my real name was Jean Szklarz and that I was a Jew from Metz. They said, "Really?" They had never figured it out. Henri Milstein escorted John and Paul Levie, Harry Baum, Freddy Gross and me to Moissac. Some of the other boys, including Lynx and Joseph and Wolf Lautenberg, stayed behind because some members of their families had been located and they were going to be reunited directly with them. We walked to the train station where we had arrived a year before and we boarded a train to Moissac.

The Holocaust Museum in Israel, called Yad Vashem, has published this information about one of its purposes:<sup>18</sup>

Yad Vashem was established to perpetuate the memory of the six million Jewish victims of the Holocaust. One of Yad Vashem's principal duties is to convey the gratitude of the State of Israel and the Jewish people to non-Jews who risked their lives to save Jews during the Holocaust. This mission was defined by the law establishing Yad Vashem, and in 1963 the Remembrance Authority embarked upon a worldwide project to grant the title of Righteous Among the Nations to the few who helped Jews in the darkest time in their history. To this end, Yad Vashem set up a public Commission, headed by a Supreme Court Justice, which examines each case and is responsible for granting the title. Those recognized receive a medal and a certificate of honor and their names are commemorated on the Mount of Remembrance in Jerusalem.

This project is a unique and unprecedented attempt by victims to pay tribute to people who stood by their side at a time of persecution and great tragedy. Based on the principle that each individual is responsible for his or her deeds, the program is aimed at singling out within the nations of perpetrators, collaborators and bystanders, persons who bucked the general trend and helped the persecuted Jews. Thus, when Yad Vashem was established in 1953, a mere eight years after the Shoah, paying tribute to the Righteous Among the Nations was included in the Remembrance Authority's mission. Struggling with the enormity of the loss and grappling with the impact of the total abandonment and betrayal of Europe's Jews, the State of Israel remembered the rescuers.

We left in such a hurry, and we were so anxious to leave and go to Moissac, that I didn't personally thank a lot of the people that I should have thanked. I was a kid -- I had just turned fifteen years old -- and somehow I wasn't thinking straight at the time. In hindsight, it is evident that the Director of Centre Bayard, Monsieur Bepmale, had to have known that we were Jewish. He was not at the school the day that we left. He would have been shot had the Germans or the Milice found out that he was hiding Jewish children at Centre Bayard. I don't believe anymore that Monsieur Bepmale took us to his vineyards in the Pyrenees to pick grapes. He took us there to get us out of harm's way during the battle to liberate Toulouse. I suppose that Monsieur Kraft must have also known our secret, and Monsieur Labite, too, because they worked for Monsieur Bepmale. Monsieur Bepmale placed his life in jeopardy to save a group of Jewish boys who one day wound up on the door step of his trade school in Toulouse. That brave man should be on the list of the Righteous Among the Nations. In my mind, he is on that list. I owe Monsieur Bepmale, and all of the members of his staff who assisted him, my life. Thank you.



Beaulieu sur Dordogne 2012  
Former E.I.F. facility  
Place de la Bridolle



Beaulieu sur Dordogne 2012  
Memorial plaque





Toulouse, France 1944  
Centre Bayard



France, Pyrenees  
Centre Bayard outing  
in the Pyrenees, August 1944



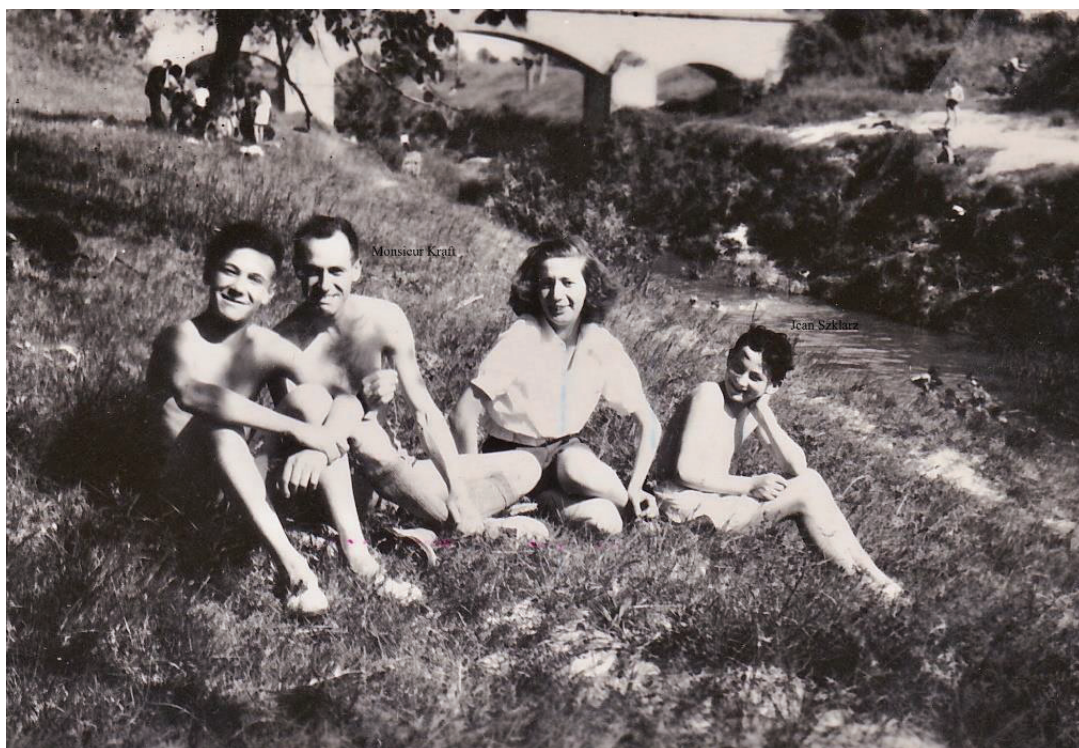


Toulouse, France  
Monsieur Bepmale, top center,  
with Centre Bayard students



Toulouse, France  
Centre Bayard students





Toulouse, France  
On a break from Centre Bayard



In front of Monsieur Bepmale's house in the Pyrenees.  
August 1944

## CHAPTER IX

### MOISSAC

#### A. *MOULIN DE MOISSAC*

In 1927, two years before I was born, Edmond Fleg (né Flegenheimer, 1874-1963), who was a French poet, playwright, novelist, essayist and anthologist, wrote a book titled “Why I Am A Jew” (Bloch 1933) that he dedicated to his “grandson not yet born.” The author noted that his sons [Maurice and Daniel] were just nineteen and fourteen years old, respectively, at the time that he wrote the book. Edmond Fleg began his reply to his unborn grandson with the following questions and answer:

I am asked why I am a Jew. It is to you, my grandson who are not yet born, that I would make my reply.

When will you be old enough to understand me? My eldest son is nineteen years old my younger son is fourteen years old. When will you be born? In ten years, perhaps fifteen. . . . When will you read what I here set down? About 1950, 1960? Will people still read in 1960? What form will the world then take? Will the mechanical have suppressed the spiritual? Will the mind have created a new universe for itself? Will the problems that trouble me today exist for you? Will there be any Jews left?

I believe there will. They have survived the Pharaohs, Nebuchadnezzar, Constantine, Mohammed; they have survived the inquisition and assimilation; they will survive the automobile. (Page xiii)

The forces of evil that arose in my generation to eradicate the Jewish people were being beaten back into Germany by the heroic efforts

of the Allied armies and the Resistance. Perfect strangers came from all over the world to fight on foreign soil and they risked and sacrificed their lives to save ours. The barbarian tide that had engulfed my homeland began to ebb, and the hidden Jewish children of France started to emerge from hiding. The EIF sent Éclaireurs out into the countryside to try and locate children who had been hidden on farms or with families in villages in the countryside. International relief organizations were ready to help us. From November 1944 to October 1947 I was a student at a trade school in Moissac called Centre Maurice et Daniel Fleg. The school was named in memory of Edmond Fleg's sons. Maurice was an officer in the French army and he died in battle in 1940.<sup>19</sup> Daniel died in Paris in 1940.<sup>20</sup>

The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (AJDC) was founded during World War I in the United States to dispense large-scale funding for international relief. The AJDC mobilized to support and resettle survivors of World War II, racing to ensure that tens of thousands of newly liberated Jews would survive to enjoy the fruits of freedom<sup>21</sup>. The many beneficiaries of the AJDC's relief efforts included the Centre Maurice et Daniel Fleg and the childrens' home at the Moulin de Moissac. Moissac is located forty-four miles north of Toulouse and three hundred and eighty miles south of Paris. It is a city in the Tarn-et-Garonne department in the Occitanie region of southern France, and it is located at the confluence of the Garonne and Tarn rivers at the Canal de Garonne. The Garonne, the Canal de Garonne, and the Canal du Midi connect the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea.

I arrived in Moissac at the same small train station where I had arrived in 1943, when I was travelling from Beaulieu-sur-Dordogne to Tonneins. Our small entourage crossed over the Canal de Garonne and we walked the short distance to our destination, the Moulin de Moissac, which is located on the north bank of the Tarn River at the Promenade Sancerre.

There has been a mill at that site since the fifteenth century. Moulins that were located on the banks of the Tarn River produced flour that was shipped to the West Indies and flour that fed Napoleon's armies. Napoleon began the construction of a bridge that bears his name between the banks of the Tarn near the Moulin. A short distance west of the Moulin, on the north side of the Quai du Port, is the house where I spent the night on the way to my brief stay in Tonneins. The Moulin no longer harnessed the energy of the Tarn as it flowed into the Garonne to turn the



turbines that used to grind wheat into flour. The Moulin had been converted into a home for Jewish children who had survived the war. Other buildings on the nearby Quai du Port housed the Centre Maurice et Daniel Fleg and additional dormitories for the youngest children.

It was not by chance that the Moulin and the buildings on the Quai du Port became a children's home and trade school. From 1939 to the Liberation, Moissac was a refuge for Jewish children who were uprooted by the war. Shatta and Édouard "Bouli" Simon were members of the EIF. They located to Moissac and, with the complicity of the city of Moissac, including the Mayor, Roger Delthil, municipal officials and citizens of the city, they opened a home for Jewish children at 18 Quai du Port, called the Maison d'Enfants. Five hundred displaced Jewish children from all over France and Europe were sheltered by the Simons and the EIF in Moissac. The facility also served as a headquarters for the EIF. Eventually, a trade school was opened in adjacent buildings.<sup>22</sup>

On August 26, 1946, ten months after I arrived at the Moulin, Bouli Simon wrote a letter to Mr. and Mrs. Salomon Feister and Rabbi Rosenberg, from Norwich, Connecticut, to thank them for their generous donation of a magnificent Torah scroll to the children of the Moulin<sup>23</sup>. In his letter, Bouli said that he wished that they could have been present to see the joy of the children upon receiving the Torah, and the care that the children took when they carried the Torah with them to their summer camp. Bouli also provided them with a brief history of the efforts to shelter Jewish children in Moissac:

Our Center which depends on the EIF is an essential part of the small community of Moissac, in the department of Tarn and Garonne, equal distance from Toulouse and Bordeaux. There had been a large Jewish community in Moissac around the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries and then they gradually disappeared and it is we who have now renewed the tradition, opening in 1939 an evacuation center for Jewish children.

Little by little, we grew bigger and sheltered about 150 children when, before the arrival of the Germans in Moissac, we had to stop everything and evacuate those children whose parents were already in the deportation camps. We placed them among peasants, in private houses, and in Christian institutions. In addition, our organization had created a network to hide the Jewish

children whom the police were looking for, even those who didn't belong to our movement. From 1942 to 1944 our service of false papers had been able to give false identities and to place in safety more than 3,000 children, none of which was taken by the Germans.

After the Liberation in August 1944 we also looked for all of our children to go to work. We were able to request a large building and we set up a complete trade school with 7 workshops: metal work, carpentry, electricity, dental prosthetics, book binding, hair styling and secretarial. We now have more than 200 boys and girls between the ages of 5 and 19, who have been deported from Poland, Hungary, Germany, Romania, Turkey, Czechoslovakia, France and so on.

We want that when they leave us they will be good Jews, good workers and good citizens.

We encountered enormous material difficulties at the beginning, then we were helped by the French government and especially by the AJDC which during the whole war was able to send us funds and which allowed us, after the Liberation to reconstitute our workshops by purchasing machinery and equipment. We have also received from America the food and clothes which we greatly needed for our house in Moissac and for the other house that we have at Jouy en Josas near Paris.

All this help had already filled us with gratitude, but when we had recently received this magnificent and unexpected gift, that Torah which was going to give our offices a new splendor, we felt towards you all who think of us, beyond the seas, a great wave of fraternity and joy.

My previous refuge at Beaulieu-sur-Dordogne, which was run by Jacob and Rachel Gordin, was part of the network that Bouli and Shatta Simon and the EIF created and ran during the war to save Jewish children. But the modest accommodations near the Dordogne river could not compare to the facility that the EIF and the Simons welcomed me to along the Tarn River in Moissac. The Moulin was an imposing structure, perpendicular to the river, with a ground floor and four upper floors. Part

of the building was built over the river, where for centuries sluices used to channel water into the turbines. When I arrived with John and Paul Levie and the other boys from Toulouse, we passed through a grand circular covered entrance with a terrazzo floor that was supported by columns. There was a series of steps to the right which led to the administrative office where we registered. I provided the staff with my name, age, family information and level of education. We were told that we had a choice of trades to study, and that we could choose what we wanted. Because of my background -- I had already spent so much time with menuiserie (cabinet making) -- I decided to continue with that trade. I also chose drafting and detailing. John and Paul Levie were not interested in any of the trades that were available at the Centre Maurice and Daniel Fleg. John wanted to be a butcher and Paul wanted to be a baker. That was not a problem for the Simons. They and their staff were resourceful, and they contacted a local butcher and a local baker. John became an apprentice at a butcher shop in Moissac, and Paul became an apprentice at a patisserie and boulangerie in Moissac. Sometimes, the butcher gave John a few big marrow bones to take back and cook for a treat. John, Paul and I would get some empty cans and build a little fire in the park adjacent to the Moulin. We cooked the marrow bones and ate the marrow out of the center of the bones. Arrangements were also made for the children who wanted to continue with higher education rather than pursue a trade.

To the left after we entered the Moulin there was a very large dining room with big round tables throughout, large windows and spacious high ceilings. In the back of the dining room there was a glass partition wall that sectioned off a room with a grand piano -- la salle du piano -- where the children who knew how to play piano would sit and play. Sometimes, lectures were given in that room and it was also used for meetings. In the basement there was a shower room with private showers that had hot and cold running water. There was a schedule of shower days for the boys and shower days for the girls. The Moulin had a huge kitchen in the basement that was fitted with new equipment. There was a room where clean clothing and linens were distributed. I had no clothing of my own. Once a week, on Friday, I was given a shirt, socks and pants, but no underwear, it didn't exist. Eventually I was given a Boy Scout uniform with my name sewn on it.

After we registered we were assigned to bedrooms. The upper floors were turned into dormitories, and the boys and girls were on

separate floors. Shatta and Bouli lived in an apartment on the uppermost floor. The dormitory floors had conference rooms for reading, recreation and for meetings. The eastern façade of the Moulin faced a park area with rows of trees called the Promenade du Moulin. That was where I cooked marrow bones with John and Paul Levie. The park was bounded to the north by the Avenue de l'Uvarium and to the south by the river bank. On the east side of the park was the Station Uval. The regional grape was the Chasselas de Moissac, and it was thought to have curative qualities -- or at least it was marketed as such. People came to the Station Uval to eat the grapes and to drink wine made from the grape and to "take the cure." On Saturday nights local bands came to play at the Station Uval and people from the town came to listen to the music and to dance. I could watch and listen to the bands from the window in my room, and I walked over there with my friends to watch.

Directly behind the Station Uval there was a compound surrounded by a high fence with a cinder block building inside. The compound was a prisoner of war camp for German soldiers. Every morning the prisoners marched out of the camp and they walked past the Moulin and over the Pont Napoleon to the south bank of the Tarn. It was odd to see German prisoners next door to a home for Jewish children. I was curious to find out what they were doing and, one day, I followed them over the bridge. I saw that the prisoners were being put to work in a furniture factory that was located on the south bank of the Tarn on the left side of the bridge. The prisoners were working at benches making handmade furniture. The western façade of the Moulin also faced a park area, called the Promenade Sancert. That park extended west to the Pont Napoleon. The westerly section of the park was bounded to the north by the Quai du Port. Buildings along the Quai du Port continued to be utilized, as they were during the war, by the Simons and the EIF, to aid Jewish children. I knew the buildings by their street numbers, such as "Dix Huit" (18) and "Quatorze" (14). The youngest children, from about six years old to ten years old, slept in dorms in Quatorze, called La Maison des Petits, and the trade school shops were located in Dix Huit. The older children, ten years old and up, slept in the Moulin.

The overall objective of the Moulin and the trade school was to provide the surviving Jewish children with friendly, comfortable surroundings, and to teach them a trade so that they could support themselves as adults. The children of all ages had their meals in the dining room in the Moulin. The food served at the Moulin was kosher.





Moissac, France  
Moulin, circa 1940s



Moissac, France 2012





Moissac, France 2012  
 “Quatorze” and “Dix Huit” Buildings  
 14 and 18 Quai du Port



Moissac, France 1944/47  
 On the roof of the Moulin

Friday night, which was Shabbat, was special. We put on our fresh clean clothes, had a nice meal together and then went to Shabbat services. Paul and John liked to go to the services, and I went with them. The services were run by Mica and by some of the religious boys who knew how to read and chant in Hebrew much better than the rest of us. It turned out to be our own version of a Shabbat service, and we sang Hebrew songs. All of the Jewish holidays were observed and celebrated at the Moulin, always with a nice meal and singing by the choir. Most of the kitchen help were Spanish Republicans who had escaped from Spain to France during the civil war when Franco took over. But the kosher kitchen was run by a nice Jewish lady, Madame Wolf. On Friday nights, they made home style Jewish chicken soup with lokshen (noodles) and chicken. The vegetable broth that had been the principal source of my nutrition since July of 1943 was replaced with a variety of food, including meat and poultry, that was good and plentiful and we could get as much food as we wanted to eat. And, most notably, bread was not rationed at the Moulin. The ritual of the cutting and weighing of the bread ration at every meal was a thing of the past. Sometimes Madame Wolf cooked gefilte fish for the Sabbath meal. She was proud of her gefilte fish, and rightly so because it was very tasty. But I misspoke during one meal. Madame Wolf came over to the table where I was seated and she asked, "How is the gefilte fish?" And I don't know why I said it, but I said, "Well, my mother made it a little bit better." I unintentionally insulted Madame Wolf; I should never have said that. She was mad at me, but she got over it and we got along fine afterwards. I was thinking about my family. We had access to more news about how the war was progressing through newspapers and radios, and we knew that the Germans were retreating from France and that most of the fighting was now in the northeast of France and in Belgium. Some of the boys who came to stay at the Moulin had fought in the Resistance, and they told us stories about what they had done during the war. As France was gradually being liberated, I and everyone else I knew were thinking about rejoining our families. The predominant thing on our minds was when would we be able to rejoin our families and how much longer were we going to be at the Moulin? Although it was very pleasant and nice to be at the Moulin, all of us wanted to go home and be reunited with our families. The war was still on, and the group of people with whom I spent most of my time and I didn't yet know what the Germans and their allies had done to our families. If anyone knew the truth at that time, no one was talking about



it. I would find out the truth soon enough, and I received most of that news in the dining room at the Moulin.

On December 5, 1944, there was a ceremony in honor of the official opening of the Moulin. We sang songs and had a nice party. Our festive mood quickly changed. On December 16, 1944, the Germans mounted a counteroffensive against the Allied forces in the Ardennes forest region of France, Belgium and Luxembourg in what later became known as the Battle of the Bulge. The initial reports that we received were not good. The Germans were winning the battle and they were regaining ground. My friends and I became frightened and concerned. We had given up our covers when we left Toulouse to go to Moissac. Where would we go and what would we do if the Germans returned? We discussed heading for the Spanish border, trying to get into Spain and then reaching somewhere in North Africa. We were relieved when we learned at the end of January, 1945, that the Allies regrouped and defeated the Germans. It was now only a matter of time before Germany would be invaded and the war would be over.

## **B. SCOUTISM**

Because the Moulin was run by the EIF, life there followed the hierarchy of Scoutism. This was true for the boys (Éclaireurs) and the girls (Éclaireuses). The childrens' home and the trade school were run by Shatta and Bouli Simon and the EIF. Shatta and Bouli were very nice, friendly and helpful people. They really went out of their way to help all of the children. They had a staff of older boys who assisted them. Henri Milstein, who was with me in Toulouse at Centre Bayard, was in charge of the musical events, the choir and performances, as well as other functions of the Moulin. Pierre Reynal, Jean Martin and two other young men named Wolf and Mica were on the staff. Pierre and Wolf were primarily involved with scouting activities. Mica was in charge of religious affairs and religious instruction. Noe, who had escorted me and John and Paul Levie from Tonneins to Toulouse, was also on the staff.

I was assigned to a room for two boys. My roommate was Louis Schloss. The room had a connecting door to another room for two. There was a bathroom on the hall with hot and cold running water. My room was on the first floor and the window in the room faced to the east and had a view of Promenade du Moulin and the German P.O.W. camp. One of the rules at the Moulin was that you were responsible for taking care



of your room. You had to clean it and make your bed every day. New linen was distributed on Friday. While we ate our breakfast, a group of older boys inspected all of the rooms to make sure that they were clean and the beds were made up military style, everything perfect and folded properly. Every day we had physical training (P.T.) the first thing in the morning right after we woke up. Rain or shine, we went outside to exercise and to run around the park. I liked P.T. and I always went. The advice that I received from Monsieur Arnaud in Ligugé about the importance of always being ready to run away was never lost on me.

The EIF was a big part of my life in France and the EIF ensured that I survived the war. I first became familiar with scouting when I stayed in Beaulieu-sur-Dordogne, and the time that I spent there was in the spirit of Scoutism. That tradition continued with even greater fervor in Moissac. When I arrived at the Moulin, the EIF organized us into a Troupe [Troop]. We were called "Troupe Juda Maccabee." The leader of the Troupe was Henri Milstein. The Troupe was comprised of several Patrouilles [Patrols]. My Patrouille was called "des Mangoustes." John and Paul Levie were in a Patrouille called "des Écureuils" which was led by an older boy named Wolf. The original leader of des Mangoustes was Charles Landau. The leader was called the Chef de Patrouille, or C.P. Louis Schloss was the assistant leader of the Patrouille, which we called the Sous Chef de Patrouille, or S.P. I was the original Secretary. Later on, after Charles Landau left Moissac to go to Israel, Louis Schloss became the C.P. When Louis left to go to America, I became the C.P.

The trade school had a book bindery and our Patrouille needed a diary. I had observed the students in the bindery as they were learning how to bind books. I collected pages from a notebook, some cardboard and leather. When I was ready, I went to the bindery and made a book with blank pages and a leather cover to use as the diary of des Mangoustes. The book, which I called "Livre Taillis des Mangouste," and still have today, contains handwritten entries made by me and by other members of the Patrouille to memorialize all of the activities of the Patrouille and of the Troupe from November of 1944 to November of 1947. Most of the illustrations that accompanied the text were contributed by Louis Schloss, who was a talented artist. Whenever the Troupe had an outing, which was called a Sortie de Troupe, or whenever the Patrouille had an outing, which was called a Sortie de Patrouille, it was recorded in the diary. Other special events were also noted in the diary.

We agreed on a Charter for des Mangoustes which set forth the principles that we chose to guide our conduct throughout our time at the Moulin. The Charter was recorded in the diary. A Mangouste:

- 1) est franc et courageux [is frank and courageous]
- 2) travaille consciencieusement [works conscientiously]
- 3) est ordonné, est punctual [is ordered, is punctual]

There was a friendly and spirited competition not only between the Patrouilles, but also between individual scouts. Although everybody wanted to be number one in the various competitions, we were all together and we were brothers. We took care of each other. Scoutism instilled in us a very clean and healthful lifestyle, and it encouraged us to help other people, to be constructive, and to develop our talents. The girls were also organized into a Troupe and Patrouilles, but they had different outings and different programs. Occasionally the boys and girls would go on a camp-out together. Because the EIF was a Jewish scouting organization, our activities and our themes were intertwined with the Jewish holidays, with Jewish history and with Jewish historical figures, like Judah Maccabee, which was the name of the Troupe. For example, the Troupe had special events on Chanukah and on Purim. We went on hikes with backpacks to visit historical and archeological sites. We camped out in the woods and had sing alongs. The EIF leaders taught us how to build a bridge with branches to cross a creek.

Our clean and healthy scouting lifestyle didn't prevent us from having some mischievous fun every now and then. The Moulin had a flat roof, which we could use as a sun deck. Bouli had a very tiny car. One day the older boys at the Moulin played a prank on him. They took Bouli's car and carried it up the stairway of the Moulin and put it on the roof. When Bouli asked where his car was, they told him that it was on the roof and we all had a good laugh. Bouli took the prank in good spirits.

As scouts, we also pursued personal projects to earn scouting badges. I had decided with two other guys to get the badge for topography, which involved creating a map that included the elevations of hills and mountains and the roads and natural features to a destination. We chose to create a map of the topography between Moissac and Castelsarrasin, a town about six miles south of Moissac. For our topography project, we planned a route that was about thirty or forty miles in length. Our plan was to leave the Moulin on Saturday morning, camp overnight at Castelsarrasin, and then return to Moissac on Sunday. We became consumed with mapping the topography of the route that we

plotted out between Moissac and Castelsarrasin, meticulously noting the environment, the roads, the rivers and streams, and measuring the elevations and the depressions. It became dark and we still had not reached our destination, Castelsarrasin. We decided to hitch a ride the rest of the way. The first car that we saw stopped to pick us up. It was a limousine, and its only occupant was the chauffeur who was driving it. He told us, "I'm the chauffeur of the Chief of Police for this area. Where are you guys going?" I said that "It's getting dark. We want to go to just outside of Castelsarrasin." He told us to "Hop aboard." So, we got into the limousine and he started to drive. Down the road we saw some lights and a police road block. The chauffeur drove through the road block and then he hit the brakes and stopped the limousine on the other side of the road block. The police ran over to the limousine with their submachine guns drawn. One of the police officers said to the chauffeur, "You guys are nuts. Why didn't you stop? I was going to fire on you." The chauffeur answered, "This is the Chief of Police's car." The police officer said, "We don't care whose car it is. We're looking for German prisoners, escapees, so we were going to fire on you." The police officer let us continue and the chauffeur dropped us off on the outskirts of Castelsarrasin. We pitched our tent and bedded down for the night in disbelief of the danger that we had just experienced in the liberated part of France. We returned to the Moulin in the morning with quite a story to tell. I prepared the topography report and the map and turned them in. The EIF leaders liked the work that I did, and they would not give it back to me. They told me, "We're going to keep it for our files." I earned the scouting badge for topography, but there was no additional badge awarded for almost getting gunned down while hitching a ride to Castelsarrasin.

The EIF published a magazine at its office on the Avenue de Ségur in Paris that was called "Revue Des Éclaireurs Israélites de France." The editor came from Paris to visit the Moulin and to meet everyone who was involved with Scoutism there. His name was Jean Paul Nathan. He came and talked to us and took photographs around the Moulin. When he took a photograph of me, I winked at him with my left eye. Subsequently, while I was reading an issue of the magazine, I noticed a column titled, "Saviez-vous que..." – "Did you know that..." To the left of the caption there was a photograph of a young scout winking his left eye. I was the face of the column in that issue and in several subsequent issues of the magazine.

The Germans surrendered Paris on August 25, 1944. That same day, the French Army marched victoriously from the Arc de Triomphe down the Champs Élysées. Three days later the American Army had its victory parade down the same route. Eight months later, by the end of April, 1945, the war in Europe was almost over and France was liberated. Lord Robert Baden-Powell, who was the founder of the International Scouting Movement, made Saint George the Patron Saint of the Scouting Movement. A jamboree was planned to celebrate the liberation of France and to honor Saint Georges. Thirty-five thousand scouts from France and other parts of Europe converged on Paris for the jamboree. Twenty months after I escaped from L'École de Travail and fled from Paris, I was selected to return to Paris to be a member of a delegation of Boy and Girl Scouts sent from Moissac to attend the jamboree. Paul Levie was also chosen to go to Paris. I put on my scouting uniform and boarded the train to Paris with the other members of the delegation. I was paired with two other boys, and we were given money at the Moulin and instructed to find a hotel to spend our first night in Paris. The next morning, we were to report to a designated assembly area to form up for what was to be the highlight of the jamboree, a great civilian victory march beginning at the Arc de Triomphe and continuing down the entire length of the Champs Élysées. After the parade, we were going to sleep in tents in one of the forests near Paris. Our train arrived in Paris in the late afternoon, and my two colleagues from the Moulin and I started walking and looking for a hotel. We spotted a place with a red light outside that looked like a hotel. We went in and we asked a lady inside, "Could we have a room?" The lady looked at us and asked, "How old are you?" I told her that I was fifteen years old. She then said, "You're too young, you can't come here, we can't give you rooms here. So, you know, you better leave." She chased us out. And then we realized that we had inadvertently walked into a house of prostitution. We eventually met another group of three boys from the Moulin. They told us that they had found a place to sleep for the night, and they said, "Why don't you come with us? There's a lot of beds over there." We went with them and wound up sleeping in beds in empty student dormitories of the University of Paris, commonly known as the Sorbonne.

The next morning I walked to the designated location in the assembly area with my companions from the Moulin. Many other scouts were headed in the same direction. The Germans were gone, and I could walk the streets of Paris without a Jewish star sewn on my jacket. We



walked up the Boulevard Saint-Michel in the Latin Quarter on the Rive Gauche, then we headed west on the Boulevard Saint-Germain and across the Seine towards our destination on the Rive Droite. I noticed that some of the buildings were riddled with bullet holes. I didn't have the time to detour to visit either L'École de Travail in the Marais or 27 Rue Lamarck on Montmartre. I think that I was afraid to go back there, even if I had the time to do so. The assembly point was along the Avenue de la Grand Armée, west of La Place de L'Étoile where the Arc de Triomphe was located. I marched with thirty-five thousand other scouts from the Arc de Triomphe and down the Champs Élysées to its terminus at the Place de la Concorde. Cheering crowds lined the famous boulevard. Music played throughout the parade. One of the grand parks of Paris, le Jardin des Tuileries, was located on the east side of the Place de la Concorde. I was now free to walk in that park. The experience was at once awesome, rousing and overwhelming. In the space of just several months, I had gone from hiding in fear for my life with a false identity to marching in a victory parade through the middle of a city that I had to flee in order to survive.

Paul and John Levie knew when we were in Toulouse at Centre Bayard that their mother and younger brother, Freddy, had survived the war. Anna Levie had found work during the war cooking and cleaning for the owners of a castle in the town of Ébreuil, located two hundred and seventy miles northeast of Moissac and twenty miles due west of Vichy. Mrs. Levie lived there, then she moved to take another job in or near Paris. Freddy was placed in hiding on a farm. Before we left for Paris to attend the jamboree and to march in the parade, Paul made arrangements to visit his mother and brother. After the parade I went with Paul and we met Freddy at a metro station in Paris. Paul introduced me to Freddy and the brothers had a moving reunion. Paul went on to visit his mother, who was still working. I found my way to the forest where the scouts were going to spend the evening engaged in various festivities that were illuminated with bonfires. We were told that Lady Baden-Powell, the widow of Lord Robert Baden-Powell, was coming over to see us. All of the scouts cleaned up and lined up to meet her. Lady Baden-Powell greeted and shook the hand of each scout, including me. It was very exciting to shake the hand of the widow of the founder of the international scouting movement. The next day we packed up and took the train back to Moissac.

During the rest of my time at the Moulin, we were told that we could form groups to go on long overnight hikes in the region. I studied geography in school but I had never seen La Manche (the English Channel), Océan Atlantique (the Atlantic Ocean) or Mer Méditerranée (the Mediterranean Sea) that bounded France to the north, west and south, respectively. I decided that I wanted to see the Mediterranean Sea. I found six other boys at the Moulin who also wanted to go on an epic hike to the sea. I planned the trip along secondary and tertiary roads, no highways. I took care of the logistics, and planned all of our destinations and overnight stops in advance. I submitted our itinerary to the EIF leaders. The trip was planned to take two or three weeks. The leaders knew where we were going and how long we would be gone. They wanted us back at the Moulin by a certain date. We gathered our backpacks, tents, a few changes of clothing and some food and headed out on our adventure. The Moulin gave each of us some spending money. When we needed to wash our clothes, we found a stream to do that. During our hike we walked by fruit orchards. We were hungry most of the time, so we went to the farmers and asked them for permission to pick up and eat the fruit that had fallen on the ground. We were boy scouts, and the farmers were very kind and they always allowed us to eat the fruit that had fallen on the ground. Sometimes we did a few chores for a farmer, like cleaning the horse stables, in exchange for the fruit or for permission to spend the night sleeping on some straw in the barn. One time we were falling behind schedule, so we decided to take a train to our next destination. We didn't want to spend the little money we had for the train fare. We boarded the train without tickets and stayed on for one stop. The ticket collector didn't catch up to us by the time we got off the train, and we were back on our schedule.

Our journey took us through the southeast of France, including the Tarn Department, the Hérault Department, the Aude Department, the Vaucluse Department and the Region of Occitanie. Along the route we visited Albi, a town built of red bricks and red tiles on the Tarn River eighty-four miles east of Moissac. We pitched our tents outside of the beautiful medieval fortified hilltop town of Carcassonne, which is located ninety-eight miles southwest of Moissac and fifty miles east of Toulouse. When we finally arrived at Montpellier, a city on the Mediterranean located one-hundred and eighty-six miles southeast of Moissac, it was late and we were tired after a long day of hiking. We decided that we wanted to sleep in a hotel instead of pitching our tents, but we didn't have

enough money for rooms to accommodate the six of us. We pooled our money and had enough for one room for two persons for one night. All six of us were wearing our boy scout uniforms. Two of us rented one room and told the others what the room number was. We then took turns, two at a time and one hour apart, to go up to the room. Either our ruse worked, or the guy at the desk didn't care how many of us crammed into the small room. We got to spend the night with a roof over our heads for a change. The next day we decided that we were going to go swimming in our destination, the Mediterranean. When we arrived at the shore there were big signs all over the place in German: "Achtung Minen," "Caution Mines." The Germans had mined the beach, and the mines had not been cleared yet. We could see the Mediterranean, but we couldn't take the chance to go swimming, and we didn't have the time to find a beach that had been cleared of mines. We stood together and gazed longingly at the beautiful sea, then turned away and headed towards our next destination, the city of Carpentras, which is located in the Provence-Alpes-Côtes d'Azur region of southeastern France, two hundred and fifty-five miles southeast of Moissac.

We learned at the Moulin that Carpentras was home to the oldest active synagogue in France. Carpentras was one of four cities –Avignon, Cavaillon and l'Isle-sur-la-Sorgue were the others -- where Jews were tolerated in that part of France during the Middle Ages and lived under the protection of the Pope. The Jews who lived in the four cities became known as the "Juifs du Pape," or the Pope's Jews. When we arrived at the synagogue it was locked. There was a sign telling us that if we wanted to go inside, we had to go to see a person at the address that was on the sign and ask that person to unlock the door. The address was around the corner from the synagogue. An old lady answered the door and we said, "Could we go in the synagogue?" She said to us, "You know, that synagogue has been closed for years during the war. There are no more Jews in Carpentras. I have the key for it, but it hasn't been opened since the Germans were here. No one has been in that synagogue, not one person. The door has never been opened since the last services in the synagogue." She paused and asked us, "Do you want to see it?" I said, "Yes." She said, "I'll open it for you." We walked with her back to the synagogue, which was located on a site where synagogues had stood since the fourteenth century. The current building was constructed in the eighteenth century. As the door opened it revealed a scene that was eerily frozen in time. There were tallit laying all over, left in place on the empty

seats as though their owners had just stepped outside for a moment to get some fresh air. The prayer books were also on the seats, opened and waiting for their owners to return to continue their prayers where they had left off. It looked like the congregants had left just five minutes ago, but we knew that no one had prayed in the Carpentras synagogue since approximately 1940. We didn't touch anything. We were mesmerized.

Edmond Fleg answered the question for his unborn grandson, "Why I Am A Jew," with philosophical words. I can't answer the question that way. I only know, and I want my children and grandchildren to know, that on that day in Carpentras, six Jewish boy scouts from the Moulin de Moissac, all survivors of the horrors that beset the Jewish community in Europe and the ancient congregation of Carpentras, spontaneously conducted a little prayer service in the oldest synagogue in France.

### C. *FRIENDS*

The Moulin was not the most famous building in Moissac. That distinction belonged to the medieval L'Abbaye Saint-Pierre, which was renowned for its fabulous tympanum on the southwest portal and for its cloisters. Located north of the Moulin, up the Rue de la République and the Place Roger Delthil, the Abbaye didn't interest me. I was more interested in the very excellent fancy patisserie that was located on the left side of the street about 50 to 100 feet from the Abbaye. As in Toulouse, we were occasionally given a few francs to spend as we wished in town. My francs were mostly spent on the wonderful pastries produced by the bakers in that patisserie. On Sunday mornings when I had some francs to spend I strolled up to the patisserie with my friends. The walls were lined with shelves filled with all kinds of pastries. We picked out and ate what we wanted, and then told the cashier what we had eaten, "I ate this, this, this and that," and then we paid for the treats before we left. I have a photograph of me walking in Moissac with one of my new friends. I remember going to the patisserie with him. We called him Canard, but his real name was Max Turteltaub. Max was a very clever dude. He rigged up radios from parts. One time I watched him take a big clock completely apart, with all of the pieces carefully laid out on a table. Max then announced, "Now, I'm going to put it together." He proceeded to take the pieces of the disassembled clock and put them all together. He got the clock working again, but there were a few parts left over on the



table. Max looked at me and I looked at him. He didn't know what he did wrong, but the clock worked. Max must have also been a pretty good cook. The following is part of an entry in the *Livre Taillis des Mangouste* reporting on a *Sortie de Troupe*: "Jean et Canard préparent une cuisine excellente." I guess that I, too, was a good cook.

My friend Lynx from Centre Bayard in Toulouse eventually joined our community. He had planned to go to Paris from Centre Bayard to live with his two sisters. They were living in a convent at that time, and they were trying to recover their parents' apartment in Paris and move back into it. John and Paul Levie told Lynx that their mother and brother were living in a castle in Ébreuil and they asked him if he could visit them on his way to Paris. Lynx went to the castle, and Mrs. Levie introduced him to the male and female overseers of the castle, the Châtelain and the Châtelaine, respectively. She told them that Lynx had lived with her other sons, Paul and John, at Centre Bayard in Toulouse. The Châtelaine took Lynx with her to go shopping in the village. They rode to the village on a horse and buggy. The Châtelaine introduced Lynx to a local carpenter. Lynx knew that there might not be room for him to live with his sisters in Paris. The carpenter offered Lynx a job with room and board, and he accepted. Lynx went to live and work with the carpenter in Ébreuil. The carpenter's work included making coffins. One of Lynx's jobs was to go to the house where a body was, measure the body and then return to the home with a custom-sized coffin. Lynx had to put the body into the coffin. He didn't like that job. Eventually Lynx's sisters were able to move back into their parents' apartment in Paris and Lynx left Ébreuil and went to live with them. He joined the EIF. There was an initiation ceremony and that was where he was named Lynx. The Salle Pleyel is a concert hall located on the Rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré in the 8<sup>th</sup> arrondissement in Paris. Lynx learned that a choir from the Moulin in Moissac was going to perform at the Salle Pleyel. Henri Milstein was the conductor of the choir and Lynx knew Henri from Centre Bayard. Lynx went to see the choir perform. He spoke with Henri Milstein, and Henri urged him to come to live at the Moulin. Lynx was big on sports and eventually he was placed in charge of P.T. at the Moulin. If anyone stayed in his room, Lynx would come and get him. Lynx joined me in the menuiserie class at the Centre Maurice et Daniel Fleg trade school.

The new pair of pants that the EIF had given to me at Centre Bayard in Toulouse also found their way to the Moulin. Charles Zimmerman, the boy who came to visit me when I was in the hospital

and permanently borrowed my pants, came to live at the Moulin. Charles reminded me that he still had my pants and he laughed and laughed about it. He was always laughing. His sister, Ida Zimmerman, also came to live at the Moulin and I became friendly with her. I had other friends at the Moulin, including Irving Blum, Charles Klein, and George Zeidman. Another friend from the Moulin was Walter Karliner. Walter was from Germany. In 1939 Walter and his mother Martha, father Joseph, brother Herbert, and his sisters Ilse and Ruth and over nine hundred other Jewish refugees tried to escape Germany by booking passage on the infamous S.S. St. Louis that was sailing from Germany to Cuba. The ship was turned away by Cuba, by the United States and by Canada and was eventually forced to return to Europe. Some passengers were permitted to disembark in Great Britain, but over four hundred disembarked in Belgium, France and the Netherlands. Walter was among those who had to return to the Continent. He and his brother, Herbert, survived the war by hiding in France. I also became friends with some of the young women at the Moulin. Trudy Elkan used to help out with watching and entertaining the younger children who slept in La Maison des Petites. Edith Loeb was my age and I became friendly with her. One day at the Moulin I notice a young man who I didn't know standing in the lobby with a suitcase. He asked me about Bouli and Shatta, and where he should register. His name was Armand Golibroda and he was born in Belgium. We became friends while we were in the shop learning cabinet making. Armand was an excellent mechanic. One of the other boys who I knew was nicknamed Bamboula and he was roommates with Charles Landau in the room that was adjacent to my room at the Moulin. Bamboula was related to the Max Factor family who owned the famous cosmetics business in Los Angeles, California. His American family used to send him food packages which included cans of tuna fish. Bamboula shared the food that he received, and so did the other kids who received food packages from relatives. It was the first time that I had eaten tuna fish.

The Moulin received donations of clothing and shoes from relief organizations that were distributed to all of the children at the Moulin. When a box of clothing or shoes arrived, I rummaged through the donations and took whatever fit me. One time a huge box of brand new shoes came in. Everybody was told that if you wanted a pair of shoes, then try them on and keep the pair that fit. I had wide feet and I couldn't find a pair of shoes that fit me. Every pair that I tried on was tight. I had

a solution to my problem. I thought back to the days in Metz when I went to play with my friend Sara Isbicki. Her father, Monsieur Isbicki, was a shoemaker. When a customer brought him a pair of shoes that were too tight, Monsieur Isbicki would soak them in water to soften the leather. Then he put a form inside the shoes to spread them and then he let them dry. I improvised on Monsieur Isbicki's technique. I picked out a pair of shoes and soaked them in water until the leather was nice and soft. I didn't have a wooden form, so I forced my feet into the shoes and wore them until they were dry. Sure enough, it worked. I had a new pair of shoes that fit my wide feet.

The Moulin also received donations of books and it had an extensive collection that included a multi-volume set on the life of Napoleon. It took me a year, but I read every volume.

Moissac had an opera house that hosted traveling opera companies. I was interested in going to see an opera but the price of admission was too costly. An opera company that was coming to town put out a call for extras to join the performance. All of the extras would get to watch the opera for free when their parts were finished. I went with a group of guys that I used to hang out with and we signed up as extras. The stage manager gave us our instructions. I was going to be an altar boy. I dressed up in a white dress and carried a wooden cross at the head of a funeral procession. Some of my friends from the Moulin had already finished their parts and they had taken their seats in the audience. When I came on stage walking with the cross, some of my buddies yelled out, "Le Juif cela," "He's Jewish." When I was finished I took my seat and asked them, "Why did you say that? You embarrassed me." They got a good laugh out of that prank.

I remained friends with some of the young people who I met at the Moulin long after we left Moissac. Ida Zimmerman married Lynx and they eventually moved to New York. Trudy Elkan moved to America. She married a Jewish survivor from Germany named Peter Kuhn and they settled in New York. Edith Loeb also moved to America where she met and married a young man from Austria name Kurt Leuchter. Kurt had come to France from Austria. He fought in the French underground during the war. In gratitude for his service, France inducted Kurt into the Légion d'Honneur [the Legion of Honor]. Kurt and Edith also settled in New York. Armand Golibroda moved to New York and changed his name to Alf Gilbert. For a few years, Alf and I ran a

small cabinet shop together in New York and we made custom furniture in the evenings after our full-time job.

It was amidst the friendly and comfortable community that Shatta and Bouli Simon, the EIF, and the AJDC created at the Moulin that I received and began to live with the news that I had been dreading.





Carpentras, France 2012  
Synagogue  
Place Maurice Charretier



Jacques Szklarz  
Farm at Bazaiges dans le Berry  
Near Argenton-sur-Creuse 1942/44

Photo courtesy of Max Knecht



Jacques Szklarz  
Passport Photo  
Paris, France 1947

## *CHAPTER X*

### *THE MARTYRS*

#### *A. LA PAIX DU MONDE, 8 MAI 1945*

Germany surrendered on May 7, 1945 in the town of Reims, France, which is located four hundred and seventy-five miles northeast of Moissac. May 8, 1945 became Victory in Europe Day [V-E Day]. The news spread quickly through the Moulin. The end of the war is recorded in the *Livre Taillis des Mangouste* with a two-page illustration by Louis Schloss, titled *La Paix du Monde, 8 Mai 1945*. The illustration is comprised of drawings of miscellaneous weapons of war with a bold “X” drawn across them on the left page, and drawings of a shepherd holding a palm tree branch -- a symbol of victory and peace -- and surrounded by wild and domesticated animals on the right page. Nothing else is written about the day the war ended. While the world rightfully celebrated this great victory of good over evil, the mood at the Moulin was more subdued. I was hoping to find my family again.

We were talking about going back to our families, leaving Moissac and saying goodbye to everybody. Our optimism quickly turned to gloom. There was a wall to the left as we entered the dining room at the Moulin. The wall ran up to the first large set of windows in the dining room. Shortly after the war ended, lists of names began to be posted on the wall. We were told that the lists were the names of survivors from the concentration camps. Before the lists were posted, I knew that the Germans had set up concentration camps, but I didn’t know the truth about the camps. I knew that the camps were not good, but I thought that they were labor camps. I didn’t know -- or didn’t want to believe -- that they were killing camps. I went through the whole war not knowing or understanding that the Germans were deporting Jews and murdering them by the millions in concentration camps. Now I knew the truth. We



were told that if our family members were not on the lists, then they were likely dead. I read the lists on the wall in the dining room and I didn't see the names of any members of my family. Day after day, everybody at the Moulin stopped to scan the lists on the wall. I don't recall anybody at the Moulin finding anyone in their family on the lists of survivors from the concentration camps. It was profoundly sad. We were given a glimmer of hope when we were told that it was possible that family members who were not on the lists were in hiding, or in a hospital or had escaped to a safe haven and that their names had not yet been reported to the agencies that were compiling the lists. From time to time some of the children at the Moulin learned that a brother or sister who had been in hiding, like I had been hiding in a trade school, had been found. Some of the relatives who were found had been hiding on farms and living with a farmer and his family.

One day I was asked if I could go to the train station to meet some young men who were coming to stay at the Moulin. I walked over to the train station with some of the other boys and we greeted them and helped them carry their luggage back to the Moulin. Those young men were survivors of the concentration camps. They were part of a contingent of survivors who were taken in by France and then sent to the Moulin to recuperate in a friendly environment with other Jewish children. They were given rooms on the third floor of the Moulin. Most of them were from Eastern Europe and they either didn't speak French or spoke only some broken French. I could understand and speak some Yiddish because my parents and grandparents spoke Yiddish in our home and some of it must have stuck with me. I was assigned to sit at a table in the dining room with some of the survivors and I spoke and understood enough Yiddish to converse with them. A few of them told me stories about the horrors of the concentration camps, but others were quiet. Their stories diminished any hope that I might see any members of my family again.

I became friendly with a survivor who was called Gogol. I had an extra yellow sweater that I didn't like. Gogol liked the yellow sweater, so I gave it to him. He told me a story from the concentration camp. Gogol was a musician. He was part of an orchestra that was forced to play music at the gas chambers before people were herded in to their deaths. Another one of the guys was an artist named Walter Spitzer. Walter stayed in France after the war and he became a famous artist. He published his autobiography in 2004, titled *Sauvé par le dessin* [*Saved by*



*drawing*] (Favre S.A.). Walter describes the moment that he was an inmate of the Buchenwald concentration camp and the Blockälteser [translates as “the Block elder” and he was another inmate in the concentration camp who was given responsibility by the Germans to administer the prisoners in his block and he was compensated by being given certain privileges, including more food] summoned Walter to speak with him. Walter was scheduled to be sent to a satellite camp where the survival rate for prisoners generally did not exceed one week. Walter’s talents as an artist were known in the camp. He had been ordered to draw pictures of a physician who was working in the infirmary. Walter identifies the physician as “Herr Docktor” in his book. The Blockälteser told Walter that he would save him from the transfer on one condition. Walter had to solemnly promise “to testify with [his] paint brushes” what he had seen in the concentration camp [*Sauvé par le dessin*, at page 153]. Walter kept his promise and he became famous for his works of art that depict the Holocaust. Many years later Walter had an exhibition at the Jewish Museum on Fifth Avenue in New York City. I went to the exhibition with a group of other friends from Moissac who had moved to New York. Walter greeted us and we reminisced about the time that we lived at the Moulin. Walter gave each one of us a signed print of one of his artworks. The arbitrariness of Gogol’s and Walter’s experiences was striking. Gogol played music to survive. Walter drew pictures to survive. They were among the few fortunate ones. The other prisoners were murdered by their German captors.

There was another guy who I remember from the dining room at the Moulin. I had lunch with him once. He was quiet and he hung out with Gogol and with Henri Milstein. Years after I had left the Moulin, Trudy Kuhn reminded me about that young man when she told me that he had written a book about his experiences in the concentration camps. The title of his book is “Night,” and it is a seminal memoir about the Holocaust. In 1986 Elie Wiesel was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

## **B. THE LIGHT**

The first letter that I had ever received at the Moulin was from Jacques. Almost twenty-one months had passed since the last time that I saw him in Châteauroux. Jacques had been living in Paris since the Liberation. He had been employed by the U.S. Army as a laborer in a supply depot. He found my name and location on a list of

survivors. I was elated to learn that my brother had survived the war, but what Jacques told me in his letter was devastating. Both of us knew that Mother and Father had been deported and we now knew that the prospect that both of them had survived the concentration camps was remote. But we didn't have any confirmation that they had perished and we were still hoping that they were hiding somewhere or had escaped. Jacques told me that Nathan and Annette had been arrested at the U.G.I.F. children's home in Louveciennes just several weeks before the liberation of Paris. They were deported to a concentration camp. Like Mother and Father, we didn't have any confirmation of Nathan's and Annette's fate, but there was little hope that they had survived. Paulette, however, miraculously escaped arrest and deportation. Jacques also found her name on a list of survivors in Paris. Jacques tracked her down and went to visit her. His letter didn't mention anything about Grandmother or any of our other relatives.

Some of the details of Paulette's survival are murky, but we know that right before the Germans came to arrest the Jewish children at the villa in Louveciennes, Paulette became ill and was taken from Louveciennes to a hospital in the neighboring town of Saint-Germain-en-Laye. The hospital was run by the Sisters of Saint Paul de Chartres. Jacques said that Paulette was found in a convent with nuns. It is likely that the Sisters who ran the hospital sheltered Paulette until the liberation. The relief organizations that were locating survivors were working on arrangements to reunite Paulette with me in Moissac.

Jacques kept writing to me, and one day I received a big package from him. He had returned to our home at the Moulin de la Reinière in Virolet. He went to our vacant apartment and gathered some of my clothes that had been left behind when I went to Ligugé and then to Paris, and he sent them to me at the Moulin. When I left Ligugé and Virolet in June of 1943 I was almost fourteen years old. When I received the package from Jacques I was sixteen years old. I had outgrown all of the clothing that Jacques sent me and didn't need it. I took the package to the laundry room at the Moulin and told them to take it and to give the clothing away to the other children at the Moulin, to whomever it fit.

It was time to come to terms with the truth. Jacques, Paulette and I were the only members of the Szklarz/Rychner family who had

evacuated Metz to live in Virolet who survived the Holocaust. I had to think of my future, and the Moulin was there to help me with that, too.

In 1983 the Beate Klarsfeld Foundation published a book by Serge Klarsfeld titled “Memorial to the Jews Deported from France 1942-1944.” Serge and his wife Beate have made it their life’s work to document and to publicize the fate of the Jews who were deported from France and murdered in the concentration camps. In 1996 they published a second book titled “French Children Of The Holocaust.” The details that follow are, for the most part, extracted from their books and are the product of their diligent and selfless work. The Klarsfelds’ books contain lists of the names of the Jews who were deported from France and were taken to the concentration camps by trains. Each train that departed France for the concentration camps was identified as a numbered “Convoy.” Most of the convoys departed from the Drancy camp in the suburb of the same name located northeast of Paris. The Drancy camp had served as a police barracks before the war. It was converted into an internment camp for Jews and it became the major transit camp for the deportation of Jews from France. Altogether, between June of 1942 and August of 1944, approximately 64,759 Jews were deported on Convoys that left from Drancy.

In their work the Klarsfelds share the passion of Émile Zola, whose outrage at the Dreyfus affair caused him to write “J’Accuse...!” in 1898 and to shine “the light” -- the truth -- on antisemitism in France during that era. The Klarsfelds’ work memorializes the truth about the deportations of the Jews from France.

### **Convoy 8, July 20, 1942**

My father, Traitel Szklarz, was taken by the German soldiers and French police in the middle of the night from our home at the Moulin de la Reinière in Virolet one hundred and twenty miles northwest to a detention camp that was located in Angers, France. According to information provided by the International Tracing Service in Bad Orolsen, Germany, Father “was committed to the Camp Angers by the “Befehishaber der Sicherheitspolizei” France [German security police in France]. On July 20, 1942 Father was put on a train [identified as a “Convoy”] with 823 other persons. His name is spelled “Dreittel” on the list of the deportees of Convoy 8. The convoy headed toward Paris, stopped at the Le Bourget/Drancy

station, then continued on its journey to Poland. The convoy arrived at the Auschwitz concentration camp on July 23, 1942. Upon their arrival, 411 men received numbers 51015 through 51425, and 390 received numbers 10177 through 10566. The Klarsfelds' book, "Memorial to the Jews Deported from France 1942-1944" (at pp. 73-74)," contains the eyewitness account of Dr. Andre Lettich, who was deported in Convoy 8. Dr. Lettich witnessed what happened to my Father at Angers and on the train to Auschwitz:

"When we arrived at Angers, any valuable possessions were taken away, as were all our dearest souvenirs, and we were piled up like sheep in the little rooms of the Seminary, 25 to 30 per room, under lock and key.

"The next day, we went down to the yard and our guardians made us board cattle cars, 75 to 80 men per car, the windows and doors hermetically sealed.

"During the trip, piled one against the other, we suffered terribly from thirst and we were obliged to sacrifice a corner of the car for our necessities...

"On July 23, at about 4 PM, six days after the departure from Tours, the train stopped and we heard violent blows and the unsealing of the cars. With their habitual screams, the SS made us understand immediately that everyone must get off and the baggage dismounted.

"They order us to line up in rows of five. We are up to our knees in mud. Mud and rain, rain and mud...they were very familiar to us for more than two years in the lost corner of Poland which Polish doctors say is the most disease-prone of their country, where typhus, typhoid and malaria reached epidemic proportions.

"If, until now, we still had some hope of being treated like humans, here we quickly understood that we were no longer men. Those who wanted, for example, to take their raincoats or hats to protect them from the rain, were made to understand, by blows on the head, that these objects no longer belonged to them.



“Finally, they brought us to the camp. I could still see at a distance the women taking another direction.”

In January 1945 the Soviet army captured Auschwitz. Documents from the concentration camp, including dozens of bound death registry volumes that contained inmates’ death certificates prepared by camp authorities, fell into Soviet hands. Each “death book” (Sterbebuch) contains hundreds of death certificates. The books remained inaccessible until 1989 when the Soviets made public forty-six of the “death books” partially covering the years 1941, 1942 and 1943. The International Tracing Service gave me a copy of Father’s death certificate. Father died in the Auschwitz concentration camp on August 26, 1942 at 10:10 p.m. The cause of death is recorded as nephritis.

### **Convoy 32, September 14, 1942**

Cousins Esther (Ernestine Rychner), Bernard, Norbert and Georgette Ellert, and Cousin Sara Rychner (spelled “Richner” on the list of deportees), were transported to Auschwitz on Convoy 32 which left from Le Bourget/Drancy on September 14, 1942. 1,000 Jews were on Convoy 32. The Klarsfelds’ book, “Memorial to the Jews Deported from France 1942-1944” (at p.274),” reports that “[w]hen they arrived in Auschwitz on September 16 [1942], 58 men were selected for work and received numbers 63898 through 63953; 49 women received numbers 19772 through 19820. The rest of the convoy was immediately gassed, except for those men selected before the arrival in Auschwitz...”

### **Convoy 36, September 23, 1942**

Cousin David Rychner (spelled “Richner” on the list of deportees) was transported to Auschwitz on Convoy 36 which left from Le Bourget/Drancy on September 14, 1942. Another 1,000 Jews were on Convoy 36. The Klarsfelds’ book, “Memorial to the Jews Deported from France 1942-1944” (at p.299),” reports that “[w]hen they arrived in Auschwitz, 399 men were selected and were numbered 65460 through 65858. One hundred twenty-six women were numbered 20723 through 20848. Four hundred seventy-five were

gassed. In 1945, 26 people from this convoy were known to have survived.”

### **Convoy 42, November 6, 1942**

My mother, Cecile Lea Szklarz, Uncle Aron and Aunt Chaya Rychner were committed from the Camp de la route de Limoges in Poitiers to the detention camp in Drancy by the Befehishaber der Sicherheitspolizei France [German security police in France]. For more than seventy years I was unaware of any written record of Grandmother Celine’s fate, and I assumed that that she also perished during the deportation. According to the Klarsfelds’ book, “Memorial to the Jews Deported from France 1942-1944” (at pp. 336-337),” Mother and Aunt Chaya “were among the 617 Jews arrested in mid-October by the SiPo-SD commando of Poitiers...” The acronym is a reference to a security service of the German SS, the Sicherheitsdienst des Reichsführers-SS. Uncle Aron’s name is not on the list of deportees that is published in the Klarsfelds’ book, but other information obtained from the United States Holocaust Museum’s Survivors and Victims Database and from records of the Mémorial de la Shoah in Paris, France, indicates that he was with Mother and Aunt Chaya. They were among the 200 Jews from Poitiers who were transferred to Drancy. Convoy 42 left Drancy on November 6, 1942 and took them to their deaths at Auschwitz on or about November 11, 1942 along with almost 1,000 other helpless souls: “When they arrived in Auschwitz, 145 men were selected and given numbers 74021 through 74165. As with Convoy 40, this number indicates that there was no prior selection at Kosel. Eighty-two women were selected and given numbers 23963 through 24044; none returned. In 1945 there were four survivors, all men.” “Memorial to the Jews Deported from France 1942-1944” (at p.337).

### **Convoy 45, November 11, 1942**

Cousins Jacob and Rolande Lejzorek were arrested on October 9, 1942. Jacob was taken to Auschwitz on November 11, 1942. “Memorial to the Jews Deported from France 1942-1944” (at p. 357). There is no record of the date that cousin Rolande, 4 years old, was deported. “French Children of the Holocaust” (at p. 375).

## Louveciennes

Louveciennes is a town in the suburbs of Paris, a short distance due west from the Bois de Boulogne and the Arc de Triomphe. It is located on the left bank of the Seine on a bend in one of the river's many serpentine turns as it exits Paris and continues flowing northwest towards its terminus at the port of Le Havre on the English Channel. The bucolic scenery of Louveciennes, and of the Village of Voisins which is now incorporated within the town, was a favorite subject of the Impressionist artists of the mid to late nineteenth century. Camille Pissarro (1830-1903), Alfred Sisley (1839-1899), Claude Monet (1840-1926), Auguste Renoir (1841-1919) and many other artists painted Louveciennes, which was conveniently located close to their galleries, studios and favorite cafés in Paris.

In 1872 Camille Pissarro placed his easel and canvas on the corner of the Rue de La Machine and what is now called Place Ernest Dreux (Mayor of Louveciennes, 1892-1908). Pissarro painted the scene, which included a road running up a slight incline towards a stone and iron gate, and a house with a sharp peaked roof. In his painting, called "Le Village De Voisins," Pissarro used the techniques adopted by the Impressionist artists, which included short, broken brush strokes and an emphasis on color and the effects of light.

I went to Louveciennes in 2012, and the scene is almost the same as the one that Pissarro painted one-hundred and fifty years earlier. That peaceful scene in Louveciennes is belied by its subsequent history.

Behind the gate and the house with the sharp peaked roof there was a building that housed an orphanage created in 1880 and called Le Séjour de Voisins. On July 1, 1943, my brother Nathan and my twin sisters Paulette and Annette and other Jewish children were moved from the U.G.I.F. Centre at 27 Rue Lamarck to that building<sup>24</sup>. The U.G.I.F. had taken over the former orphanage building. The children lived there until January 1944 when they were moved to a second building in Louveciennes. Heading in a southerly direction, the Rue de la Machine terminates at the intersection of the Rue de la Paix and the Rue de Voisins. The Rue de la Paix continues south from the intersection and it is bifurcated by a railroad right of way. The second building where Nathan, Paulette and Annette were taken is a villa that is located on the east side of the Rue de la Paix south of the

intersection with the Rue de Voisins and north of the railroad right of way.

My younger siblings had survived the war in the care of the U.G.I.F. One month remained before the liberation of Paris. Fate didn't intervene to save Nathan and Annette from the last murderous gasps of the German invaders. On July 22, 1944, while Paulette was in hospital in Saint-Germain-en-Laye, Nathan and Annette were arrested together with all of the other Jewish children in the villa in Louveciennes and taken to Drancy. They were among the 232 Jewish children who had been living in U.G.I.F. Centres in the Paris area who were arrested on the eve of the liberation.

Convoy 77 departed from Drancy for Auschwitz on July 31, 1944 carrying Nathan and Annette and approximately 1,300 other deportees, including 327 children under 18. Convoy 77 was the next to last convoy from Drancy that took Jews to their deaths in the concentration camps. Convoy 78 left from Lyon on August 11, 1944, and Convoy 79 left from Drancy on August 17, 1944.

Denise Holstein had taken care of Paulette and Annette at 27 Rue Lamarck. She continued to take care of them at Louveciennes. Denise was arrested with the children and deported to Auschwitz. She survived but "protected [her] silence" for fifty years. In 1995 Denise authored her testimony which she titled, "I will never forget my children of Auschwitz..." (Edition No. 1 de Calmann Levy). In 2006 my daughter, Carol Nicholson, was searching the internet for the names of survivors from Louveciennes. Carol happened upon a photograph of Denise with the children that was taken on the front stairs of the villa in Louveciennes. Carol investigated further and she discovered that Denise was living in Antibes, France. Paulette and I have visited with Denise in emotional reunions at her apartment in Antibes. Denise knew that Paulette was in hospital when the other children were arrested, but she was not aware that Paulette had fortuitously escaped deportation.

Denise witnessed the murders of my brother Nathan and my sister Annette. This is a part of Denise's testimony, reprinted with her permission from "I will never forget my children of Auschwitz...". The translation from Denise's original French is by Maurice Barnes, Paulette's husband:

A Social Assistant of the U.G.I.F. drove me to the Guy Patin centre, near to the Gare du Nord. I



boarded in this establishment with the children who had been separated from their parents, had no news of them and who were now, without doubt, for the most part (fortunately, we didn't know until later) orphans. I spent three weeks in this centre which was suddenly closed, then three months in another, a very large one, in Rue Lamarck. I was relatively free, I was able to resume my studies at Lamartine college and I could leave and go to see my grandmother on condition that I was back every evening at 6 o'clock. I didn't think of escaping because I was well aware that if I disappeared, it would be my grandmother who would be held responsible. Besides, the problem was always the same: where would I go, me who didn't know another soul in Paris?

One day, without giving me a reason, I was told that I would now be going to live in Louveciennes, in a suburb of Paris. There was a group of small children of all ages and a general supervisor, Suzanne Furst, who became a true friend. It was like a big family in the country. The summer passed quickly and everything was quite pleasant until I became ill again and had to have an operation on my appendix. A short stay then, in the hospital at Saint-Germain where my grandmother came to see me and Miss Furst each day made the journey on foot from Louveciennes.

1st November, I returned to the centre where I was made welcome and where everybody was very kind to me. But, three weeks later, my grandmother arrived without telling me she was coming. She was not really allowed to come because Louveciennes was in Seine-et-Oise and it was forbidden to travel from one department to another but she didn't hesitate to take the train, hiding her star. She had tears in her eyes and she could not speak. She came because she had received a letter from my parents announcing their departure on 20<sup>th</sup> November 1943, for an unknown destination. It was a small piece of paper, a letter of tiny handwriting, without doubt secretly concealed in

a bag of laundry from Drancy. Its tone was sad but without panic presumably to reassure us that they were not afraid. The beginning was written on Sunday morning, first by Maman; “The list of departures has been given out...” They were leaving for Germany, towards the unknown but at least they were leaving together. It will be necessary for grandmother to look after us, my brother and me, suggested Maman who knew that she had nothing to fear in that regard. Papa added “My little sweet darling, we wait patiently for your news but we are assured that you are reasonably well and that you are coping with your new country holiday without too much effort....and soon, we will all be together again”. In the afternoon they added several more phrases just so they could fill the paper but I could sense their sadness. “What else will we have to endure until the end of the war?” asked Maman worrying about what would happen to our house, our business.... “if we find anything left between our walls it will be a miracle.” And she sighs “Let’s talk about the next Mardi Gras holidays! Will we be cooking pancakes at our place in a year?”

This horrible news is a terrible shock. I know Drancy. I have often seen people leaving and I know how the internees dread that they will be sent to “Pitchipoi”. I thought, like Papa always said, that they would never be deported, that they were “indeportable.” This special convoy of fifteen hundred people, made up of mainly French “indeportables” was a reprisal measure taken by the Germans who had discovered the beginning of a tunnel that was being dug. I wish that I had not been taken ill, that I had stayed with them, gone with them. It was about this time that life at Louveciennes deteriorated and things became much more difficult. The director, Monsieur Louy, sent back Miss Furst, my friend who was older than me and with whom I felt protected. He decided that I could not continue to do my studies (I was doing them by a correspondence course) and that I had to

work in order to eat. He became obnoxious and I was unhappy enough to want to run away. Of course, I didn't do it because of the problems this could cause my grandmother.

Just then, the building is requisitioned by the Germans and the centre is relocated in the villa in the Rue de la Paix. I am put in charge of a group of nine little children, aged from four to eight years.

The first centre at Louveciennes was originally an agricultural orphanage founded in 1880. The second was a requisitioned villa where the children were divided into small groups throughout the rooms. I had charge of nine little ones and I had the chance to have a corner to myself because my bed was in the wardrobe. In a photo taken by a friend and which was given to me after the war, all ten of us are on the stairs at the front of the house. I was seventeen years old, with round cheeks, long curly hair tied at the back. On my chest there is the star, pinned to my blouse. Estelle Jakubowicz snuggles against me. She is six. She wrinkles her nose, she looks serious. She is the most bewildered, always clinging to me and I keep telling her not to call me "Maman", that I am not her mother and that her mother will soon be back.

The others smile sweetly at the camera, their characteristics captured forever on this photo taken shortly before they left for Auschwitz, shortly before their assassination. Marie-Anne Vexler, with her big blue eyes and her black hair is my favourite. She is also six. Her sister Claude-Renee is a little older. **Annette and Paulette Szklarz have short hair and slanting eyes** [emphasis added]. Rosette Grimberg has a mischievous face and is always hungry. Regine Rain and Jeanette Goldman are the girls without histories. Samy Bordine is the boy of the group, a little monkey, always cheerful. His brother and sister are also boarders at Louveciennes, but in another room with another carer.

There were forty little boarders at the centre in Louveciennes. Some were arrested in the Paris area; others lived in the Nancy region where the war had chased them and their families in November 1939. Refugees from the bordelais, they had been expelled by the Germans to Vienna where they were interned in July 1941. Their parents had been deported in July or November 1942 while they, themselves, had been entrusted to local families and then confined in the camp at Poitiers during the spring of 1943. This is what Serge Klarsfeld has been able to establish thanks to the archives of the U.G.I.F. These children had been spared the first time because of their French nationality although their parents were considered as foreigners. It appears that they were allowed a certain freedom of movement by the Gestapo which was not granted in all regions. At Chalon-sur-Marne, for example, the children were deported at the same time as their parents.

At night, I get up to comfort those who have nightmares. In the morning, I help them to get dressed and then we go downstairs for breakfast. There, the supervisors take charge. Then they go to the school in Louveciennes. On the days without classes we take them to the woods at Marly. Each day someone comes to check that everyone is well and that nobody is missing but we never see the Germans. The director, M. Louy is from Alsace. He is a strict man who appears to not particularly like the children. He is in favour of teaching by slapping, while his daughter parades in front of the little ones, sucking a lollipop and sticking out her tongue. It also suits him to transfer the rations allocated to the centre to his own family table at the expense of the other children who do not have enough to eat. On this point, I complained to the U.G.I.F. An inspection was made and that day, curiously, the meal was much better and more plentiful. I must have been pretty disgusted to have made such an audacious complaint and I expected to



suffer the consequences. But the opportunity never arose, for in fact on the morning of 22<sup>nd</sup> July at 6 o'clock, when there was not yet anybody in the streets of Louveciennes, I saw through the window of my room a German officer and some civilians making their way towards the house. I hastened to the office of the director who received me coldly, but the officer was already there. He had come to arrest us, all of us. The house was surrounded. It was necessary to wake the children, dress them, and put their clothes and a little food in their blankets, for we didn't have any suitcases. Apparently, the Germans were anxious that we left before inhabitants of Louveciennes awoke so they could not witness this arrest of young children.

They pushed us roughly onto a bus. The little ones didn't understand what was happening and we told them we were going to the country. We encouraged them to sing. I quickly realised we were going to Drancy. I was not too upset for I knew that I would be re-united with old acquaintances. The end of the war was near, the allies had landed in Normandy six weeks ago and we would soon be free. On arriving at Drancy, however, I was a little less calm when I saw a large number of buses full of children. Then I realised that all the centres of the U.G.I.F had been raided.

Serge Klarsfeld wrote in the booklet devoted to this drama "Ten or so children's centres of the U.G.I.F. were still being run in the vicinity of Paris in July 1944. The children had been due to be dispersed since the Allies were approaching Paris, but the directors at the time (the first having been deported with their families for protesting) didn't dare to do it, fearing no doubt, similar reprisals by the Gestapo. As for the resistant Jews, being well aware of the situation which pre-occupied them, they didn't take the initiative of using force by themselves and made the recommendation to the directors of the centres".

Serge Klarsfeld explained that the S.S. Alois Brunner took the decision, on 20<sup>th</sup> July, to arrest and transport to Drancy, later to be deported, the two hundred and forty-one children that were accommodated in these centres. He wanted to exterminate “future terrorists”. Of the forty-one children snatched from Louveciennes three quarters would be deported. Michele Louy, the director’s daughter, was freed immediately, together with her parents because they were not Jewish. Three children, Pierre, Josette and Francois Nelson were not taken to Auschwitz but directly to Bergen-Belsen where there was not systematic extermination. They met up with their mother at Drancy and with her they were deported to this more lenient camp because their father was a prisoner of war and they were considered to be hostages. They will return, as well as Maurice, Regine and Samuel Przemisliawski who were sent to Bergen-Belsen for the same reason. Of the three-quarter others, I will be the sole survivor.

At Drancy, with my friend Beila Dymant, who was a little younger than me and therefore, not a helper, we were in charge of almost all the children of Louveciennes. There was plenty for us to do in taking care of them; we washed them, looked after them, made sure they ate and did all we could to help them through a difficult situation. We were quickly given our mauve cards, from which we learned that we were “deportables” and we were left to hope that the Allies would arrive soon. But on 31<sup>st</sup> July we left for the unknown. It was the last convoy for Auschwitz. Three weeks later the last of the prisoners remaining at Drancy were liberated. We told the children they were going to be re-united with their parents so they were not aware of the fate that awaited them. The news of our departure was received in the camp as a terrible catastrophe.

We were taken to a small station near to Drancy (I found out later it was Bobigny), where we

were made to clamber, with our bundles, on to cattle wagons which were parked on out-of-the-way sidings. At midday the convoy rattled off. Thirteen hundred people in unbelievable conditions, piled in with a few mattresses, some buckets and barely enough water to drink. At that time it was really hot and there were only a few very small openings to let in a little air. On the other hand, there was no shortage of food that we couldn't eat (sacks of flour, potatoes...) that the Germans will retrieve when we arrive.

There were sixty in our wagon, about fifty of which were children and I was the only carer. Of course, I was a little overwhelmed. Fortunately, Beila and some boys that I knew from the Louveciennes centre were there to help. As for the other adults, they were hateful and resented the fact they were being disturbed by the children who, because of the lack of space, fidgeted, made a noise, and complained about the heat, thirst and lack of air. I wore an armband which allowed me to disembark whenever the train stopped, to go and look for as much water that I could bring back in makeshift containers and empty the hygiene buckets which had already overflowed in the wagons. I likewise had a slender chance of being able to breathe in some fresh air, drink a little more than the others and take a quick pee. But the stops are rare. From the first evening crossing the Rhine, the journey continued to get more and more painful, and always without knowing where we were going.

On the third night we stopped with a jolt. The doors were flung open and the children, who for the most part were finally asleep, were woken with the shouts of "*Raus! Schnell!*" (Outside! Quick!) It was necessary to dress them and gather their various bits and pieces. They were terrified, pulled outside by men in striped convict's uniforms who didn't speak French and who would not let anybody take their luggage. I saw one whose appearance was a little less sinister than the others, although he had the same

shaved head and haggard look. He had big blue eyes and it seemed to me that he had to be French. In fact, he told me to go back into the wagon so that nobody would see him speaking to me. Then he told me that we were in Auschwitz, that this was hell, all we had was work, there was no place to sleep and very little food, just enough to keep us alive. He also told me "Above all, don't hold the kid in your arms". I didn't understand. I asked him what he meant. "You will understand after being here a couple of days." Then, pointing to the little ones "You will see, you will find out". And then, apparently, he didn't want to talk about it anymore. I thought he was crazy. Nonetheless, I asked him if he knew anyone by the name of Holstein in the camp. He gave a wry smile "There are maybe several millions in this camp and I would advise you not to ask for news of your family, think no more about it".

By this time, the situation was terribly alarming and, as I climbed down from the wagon I saw a little girl, all alone and crying. I took her by the hand. The old man came towards me and in an authoritative voice shouted "Don't you understand? Don't hold the child's hand!" I felt my heart tighten; I left the child in the middle of the crowd and walked alone along the railway track as I had been ordered. It was night but the searchlights illuminated us brightly. A little further on across the road stood five or six Germans. One of them, much bigger than the others, made gestures with his crop without saying a word, sometimes pointing to the left, sometimes to the right. I realised that all the little children were being sent to one side, with the old people. On the other, there remained only those who looked to be about between eighteen and thirty-five. Some families were heartlessly separated without any explanation whatsoever. It didn't matter if it was husband and wife, mother and child, brother and sister. There were tearful scenes of people clinging to one another but the



Germans showed no emotion and violently hit those who tried to leave their line. There was a terrible sensation of fear. Or else they were sent to the same side, always the side of the children, those that didn't want to be separated. This is when I saw the last of my friend Beila, with her brother and sister. And it is when I witnessed the disappearance of the children of Louveciennes and the other U.G.I.F. centres, and above all, the nine little ones who I looked after for several months and to who I became so much attached.

Everything happened very quickly and I am not able to say if this scene lasted two hours or half an hour. Everything was brisk and brutal. The Germans carried out their selection process with great cruelty, as if they were choosing animals for market.

The orphanage that was secluded behind the gate and the house with the sharp peaked roof that Camille Pissarro portrayed so beautifully for eternity in "Le Village De Voisins" is now gone, but the villa on the Rue de la Paix still exists. Something has been added to the gate at 1 Place Ernest Dreux. A white marble plaque has been bolted to the stone pillar. The plaque states, in part, "Remembering these innocent martyrs" and it lists the names of the thirty-four children and their five caregivers who were taken from Louveciennes and murdered at Auschwitz. My brother and my best buddy Nathan and my beautiful little sister Annette [incorrectly identified as "Danielle"] Szklarz are on that plaque, for eternity.



Louveciennes, France  
 U.G.I.F. Center, Rue de la Paix 1944  
 To the right: Denise Holstein  
 Top row: Second from right, Paulette Szklarz  
 (crew cut), Annette Szklarz to Paulette's right

Photo courtesy of Denise Holstein



Louveciennes, France  
 U.G.I.F. Center, Rue de la Paix 1944  
 First row, right to left: Paulette, Nathan and Annette Szklarz

Photo courtesy of Denise Holstein





## *CHAPTER XI*

### *JACQUES AND PAULETTE*

#### *A. LE CHAMBON-sur-LIGNON*

The EIF had fulfilled its mission. Its heroes saved me and thousands of other Jewish children. Members of the EIF also fought in the Resistance, and many of them lost their lives. I also could not have survived without the help of untold numbers of the non-Jewish people of France who resisted the German invaders and worked to defeat them and to thwart the deportation of the Jews of France.

Le Chambon-sur-Lignon is located three hundred and thirty miles northeast of Moissac and about seventy-two miles south of the city of Lyon. The town is built on a plateau in the Vivarais Mountains of the Massif Central in south central France, and it is in the Haute-Loire Department. From July 29 to August 27, 1945, thousands of Jewish children from all over France who had survived the war, I and a contingent of scouts from the Moulin, gathered on the plateau of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon to attend the EIF's Camp National au Chambon-sur-Lignon. The summer camp was organized to thank the people from the Huguenot Protestant community of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon and the villages that were scattered throughout the entire mountainous plateau region. We learned at the Moulin that the community was very active in saving Jewish children and hiding them from the Germans during the war. The inhabitants of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon provided refuge for approximately 5,000 people, including an estimated 3,000 – 3,500 Jews, during the war. They sheltered the refugees in their homes, in hotels, on farms, and in schools, accepting everyone who needed help without question. In 1990 Israel recognized all of the inhabitants of Le Chambon-sur-



Lignon and those of the villages in the region collectively as “Righteous Among the Nations.”<sup>25</sup>

I camped out with the other boy scouts from the Moulin and from all over France and we mingled with the community. Wounded soldiers from the French Foreign Legion were convalescing in a hospital in the area. The soldiers were brought over to the campsite, some in wheelchairs, and we entertained them to cheer them up. I put on a funny skit that I had watched Lynx perform when we were in Toulouse. I borrowed a bunch of shirts or sweaters, whatever I could find at the campsite, and put them on. I announced that I was going to walk a tight rope and I recruited two volunteers to hold up an imaginary rope at a certain height above the ground. I said, ‘I’m going to walk that rope,’ and I would make a spiel and talk back and forth. I said, “As soon as I take my sweater off, I’m going to start.” And then I’d take the sweater off and then I’d take a look at my assistants. I would then say, “Wait, this is no good. One of you guys moved. Let me straighten the rope out, it’s not even, it’s not level.” So I would go over there and I’d move one guy’s hands down a little bit, a little more than necessary. Then I would say, like a carnival guy, “Yeah, I’m going to walk. I have no fear.” Just as I was about to walk the imaginary tight rope, I repeated the process and I’d say, “Wait, this is no good. One of you guys moved.” I kept doing this until, at the end, by measuring and by moving the guys back and forth and moving their hands further and further down, the imaginary rope was on the ground. I then carefully walked the tight rope to a round of applause.

The assembly of scouts from throughout France on the plateau in the Massif Central served another purpose. It was an occasion to mourn and remember all of our family, friends, loved ones and saviours who were lost, and to begin to start a new life after the Holocaust. Bouli and Shatta and the other administrators at the Moulin realized that most of the boys had not had their bar mitzvah because of the war. They decided that we would have one collective bar mitzvah. About six of the more religious guys were selected to lead the service. I cleaned up that Friday night and participated in the service with John and Paul Levie and all of the other bar mitzvah boys at the Moulin. After the service we had a nice dinner in the dining room that was prepared by Madame Wolf. It was a unique bar mitzvah, without my parents and family, but that important moment

in my Jewish life that the Germans had stolen from me was given back to me in a special and compassionate way by the Moulin.

## **B.     *RETURN TO METZ***

Jacques had moved from Paris to Metz. In the summer after the war ended, Shatta and Bouli told me that they wanted me to go to Metz to see my brother, who I hadn't seen in so long. They gave me a train ticket to Metz so that I could spend a week with Jacques during the summer. I packed some clothes, put on my Boy Scout uniform and took the train from Moissac to Paris. When I arrived at the railroad station in Paris I took the Metro to the Gare de l'Est where I boarded the train to Metz. I was ten years old when I left Metz and the Moselle River behind me as my family crammed into Father's Matford to go to Virolet. I was now sixteen years old and I was returning home.

My reunion with Jacques was very, very traumatic. We embraced and supported each other against the emotionally crushing weight of the horrors of the past six nightmarish years. We talked and caught up with our lives over the past two years. Jacques had contacted his friend Max Knecht. Max's father David Knecht helped Jacques find work with farmers in the small village of Bazaiges dans le Berry near the town of Argenton-sur-Creuse.

After the D-Day invasion Jacques had gone to the town of Argenton-sur-Creuse and joined the French underground. Jacques never spoke to me about what he did in the Resistance, with one exception. He was out with a group of Resistance fighters one day. They gave him a submachine gun to carry, even though he didn't know how to shoot it. He was riding in a truck with a group of the Resistance fighters when a German truck drove by heading in the opposite direction. The other Resistance fighters started shooting at the German truck. When the shooting was over, Jacques jumped from the truck. He told one of the other young fighters that they should leave their guns in the field and walk into a nearby town. When they got to the town they saw an old woman crying and she told them that the Germans killed her husband. Jacques saw that there were bodies in a field. He went into the woman's house with the other Resistance fighter. Eventually they left the house and they heard shouts of "Halt!, Halt!". German SS troops wearing the insignia of the Das

Reich Panzer Division herded Jacques and the Resistance fighter and about 200 people from the town and lined them up against a wall in a plaza. Three machine guns were aimed at them, one on a gun mount, another mounted on a truck and a third mounted on a tank. They stood up against the wall for about six hours, from 4 p.m. to 10 p.m. The French Red Cross came along and asked the Germans to release the women and children. The Germans initially refused and Jacques heard them say that all of the people were terrorists and they needed to be executed. He felt at that moment that his life was over, thinking “that’s the end of us.” Eventually the Germans said that all of the women and children under the age of 14 could leave. Jacques and the remaining prisoners were taken into a yard and told that they would sleep there for the night. The next morning their papers would be checked. Whoever had papers in order would be allowed to go home, anyone who didn’t have papers would have to go with the Germans to Limoges. In the morning the Germans started checking papers. Jacques’ papers identified him as a Jew. He kept moving towards the back of the line, thinking that eventually the Germans would get tired of checking papers. They didn’t get tired. They checked Jacques’ papers. The German soldier asked Jacques, “How come you are in this town when your papers say that you work on a farm?” Jacques made up a story. He told the German soldier that he worked on a farm, but his farmer gave him the day off because he wanted to come into town to buy shoes and he was caught by a patrol. Jacques’ story worked. The Germans released him and everyone else who had papers with them. They were told that they could leave one hour after the Germans left the town. Others in the group were not as fortunate. About ten guys who didn’t have papers were taken by the Germans when they left town. Jacques learned that they were taken outside of the town where they were forced to dig their own graves and then they were shot.

Jacques’ narrow escape from death is just one example of how the French people, and not only the Jews of France, also suffered under the German occupation. After the D-Day invasion in Normandy, the Germans brought troops from other parts of France up to the front to repel the Allied forces. The Resistance ambushed some of the German forces as they moved north. The German reprisals, and especially the reprisals that were meted out by the SS Das Reich Panzer Division, were swift and merciless. On June 9, 1944 the

Germans hanged 99 inhabitants of the city of Tulle from balconies throughout the city; about three persons for every German soldier killed during a battle the day before. The same day the Germans massacred 56 civilians, 6 French soldiers and 5 Resistants and gendarmes in Argenton-sur-Creuse. The next day at Oradour-sur-Glane the same German soldiers killed 642 people; the men were shot and the women and children were burned in the village church. On August 25, 1944 the German soldiers encircled the village of Maillé and its 500 inhabitants. In about two hours the soldiers murdered 124 people by bullets, bayonets or fire. An 88mm artillery piece was placed on high ground near the village and the Germans fired round after round of shells into the village.<sup>26</sup>

Jacques went to work for the American army in a supply depot. He moved freight and loaded and unloaded trucks. After Germany surrendered the French prisoners of war returned to France. Jacques found Cousin Joseph Rychner's name and address on a list of prisoners who had been repatriated. Joseph was living in Paris and Jacques went to see him. Although they had never met, Joseph remembered his cousins who had sent him packages while he was a prisoner of war. Joseph was a furniture upholsterer before the war and he returned to that trade. Joseph urged Jacques to become an upholsterer. He told Jacques that he could get him a job where he was working, and that he would teach Jacques how to be an upholster. Jacques accepted Joseph's offer and he started to learn upholstery. Jacques didn't stick with it at first and he left that job to go back to Metz.

When he got to Metz, Jacques went to our apartment at No. 7 en Vincentrue. Somebody else was living there but he was able to go inside. All of our furniture was gone. Jacques went to see either the landlord or an official at the City Hall. He was told that he could have another apartment in the same complex of buildings. That apartment was not furnished, but Jacques was told that there was a big warehouse in the city that was filled with furniture that was taken from the apartments of Jewish families in Metz, and that he could go there and take whatever furniture he wanted.

At the apartment Jacques showed me the other things that he found when he had gone back to Virolet after the war. He had clothes from my parents. He brought the clothes from Virolet hoping that Mother and Father had survived and that they would be found somewhere. He



handed me a cardboard shipping tube. I opened it. Inside was my Certificat d'Études that I had gotten from Poitiers. It was delivered by mail and left at our empty apartment in Virolet. Jacques had my father's wristwatch. He said to me, "I want you to have the watch" and he gave it to me. Jacques also found his bar mitzvah tallit, the Kodak camera that was given to him as a bar mitzvah present, and a few photographs. He recovered the "Livret de Famille" in which my parents recorded their marriage and the births of all of their children. And, I learned years later, he found Mother's handbag.

The next day I went walking in Metz looking around the old places. I first went to see the apartment where my cousins Norbert and Georgette Ellert had lived. The fountain in the small plaza on Le Quai Félix Maréchal along the Moselle where I used to play with my cousins was there, but nobody was in the apartment across from the fountain. I noticed that the Epstein patisserie that was located across the Moselle from where our apartment was located had reopened. I started walking over the Pont Saint-Georges towards the patisserie. As I was walking I noticed a man who was walking with a younger man. I immediately recognized them. The man was one of the men who prayed at our home at the Moulin de la Reinière on that last fateful Yom Kippur on October 1, 1941, and the younger man was his son who had waited outside during the service with the other children, including Joseph Russak and me. The man who I saw in Metz was my friend Joseph Russak's uncle, and he had his eldest son with him. Joseph's uncle was the only adult who attended the Yom Kippur service in Virolet who had survived the war. I stood about twenty feet away from him and I couldn't bring myself to talk to him. We stared at each other in disbelief. I couldn't say a word; I was choked up. I had to walk away. I didn't want to talk to him because I didn't want to find out what happened to my friend Joseph. I just walked away from Mr. Russak and his son.

Serge and Beate Klarsfeld uncovered what happened to my friend Joseph Russak. According to the Klarsfelds' book, "Memorial to the Jews Deported from France 1942-1944 (at pp. 251-252)," Convoy 29 departed from Drancy for Auschwitz on September 7, 1942 with 435 women and 565 men. The list of deportees that the Klarsfelds found was divided into seven sublists. The sublist for Drancy contained 111 names, among them the family of "Max (39) and Esther (38) Russak and their five children: Berthe (19), Irene (17), Salomon (16), Joseph (13), and Irene (12) [two Irenes in original]." Convoy 29 arrived in

Auschwitz on September 9, 1942. Upon arrival, the Germans murdered my friend Joseph Russak, his family and most of the rest of the deportees who were on Convoy 29 by putting them into gas chambers.

The Germans desecrated the French synagogue in Metz and turned it into a house of prostitution during the war. After the American army liberated Metz some of the soldiers volunteered to clean up and restore the synagogue.<sup>27</sup> I went to the Polish synagogue where Grandfather Pierre had prayed and died. Somebody told me that there was going to be a meeting at the Hebrew School that I had attended before we left Metz in 1939. I went to the meeting. There was a bunch of boys sitting around on the floor. My friend François Brunwasser was in the group. He wasn't the same guy anymore because he went through hell. He told me that he had survived the Auschwitz concentration camp. We couldn't communicate too much, but he described to me some things from Auschwitz. There was a big shadow over his face. He was hurting and I hurt for him.

Jacques' friend Max Knecht and his entire family survived the war living in Angoulême. They were very, very lucky. Max returned to live in Metz together with his parents, David and Golda, and some of his siblings. Mr. Knecht invited us for Shabbat dinner on Friday night with his family. We went to their apartment in Metz and had a nice dinner. The dinner table was adorned with a pair of Shabbat candlesticks that used to belong to Grandfather Pierre and Grandmother Celine. Jacques had found them in Virolet, but they were broken. He gave the candlesticks to Mr. Knecht in gratitude for the help that he had given Jacques during the war and in memory of his great friendship with our father. Mr. Knecht had the candlesticks repaired and they illuminated the dinner table.

Jacques and I crossed the Moselle on the Pont Saint-Georges and walked up the Rue des Jardins which rose on an incline from the bottom of a hill at the traffic circle by the Rue de l'Arsenal to the top of the hill where the street terminated at the Place d'Armes. The Rue des Jardins was where Father had had his warehouse. It was the commercial artery of the Jewish community in Metz and before the war both sides of the street were lined with stores that were owned and operated by Jewish merchants. The once bustling street was now a ghost town just like the Rue de Rosiers in the Marais when I was at L'École de Travail in Paris. The Jewish stores on the Rue des Jardins were closed; their owners had

been deported and murdered by the Germans. The Place d'Armes was dominated by the Cathédral Saint-Étienne, also called the Cathédral de Metz, which was located to our right as we exited the Rue des Jardins, and by the Cabinet du Maire – Metz City Hall – which was located to our left across the plaza.

The Maire had a cavernous attic where furniture and other personal property that had been cleaned out from Jewish apartments in Metz was stored. Jacques and I went up into the attic to see if we could find something that belonged to our family. We entered the attic and our eyes widened at the grim sight that we saw. The personal belongings of the once vibrant Jewish community of Metz were stacked in piles on the floor of the attic. Pictures and paintings were leaned against the walls. The property was collecting dust waiting to be claimed by their owners. But most of the owners would never return to reclaim their memories and their cherished belongings. One thousand five hundred Jews from Metz were deported from France and murdered in the concentration camps. In 1931, two years after I was born, the Jewish population of Metz was about four thousand one hundred fifty. Jacques and I spent several hours in the attic carefully going through all the piles of stuff. We were hoping to find our parents' wedding picture, the picture of grandfather Henri Szklarz with the big scar on his forehead, and other family photos and personal belongings. There were hundreds of pictures in the attic. We went through all of them but we left disappointed because we could not find any of our family pictures.

Jacques took me to see an old Frederic March movie, *Anna Karenina*. Jacques was working odd jobs here and there around Metz, buying and selling things. The American army had occupied the Frescaty air force base near Metz. Jacques made some money buying and selling things to the soldiers who could not leave the base. He told me that if some soldiers wanted Cognac, he would buy it and then slip it to them through the fence that surrounded the base. One time that Jacques did that the soldiers took the bottle of Cognac from him and then they refused to pay him for it. Jacques learned his lesson and he got even. He asked for payment in advance, then he returned and passed a Cognac bottle back through the fence that he had filled with water.

The week that we spent together in Metz went by fast, and the time came for me to return to the Moulin. Jacques reminded me that the Jewish organizations in Paris were making arrangements for Paulette to come to Moissac to stay with me. We said goodbye, promised to stay in

touch, and I boarded a train back to Moissac where I would resume my classes in the trade school. Jacques gave me his Kodak bar mitzvah camera as a present.

### **C. *MY STAMP COLLECTION***

Father's watch stopped working when I returned to the Moulin. I went to the office and showed Shatta the watch and I told her, "My father's watch isn't working." Without any hesitation Shatta told me, "Go to the jewelry store in town. We'll pay to have your father's watch fixed."

One day in October 1945 the office at the Moulin told me that my sister Paulette had arrived and that she was waiting for me at the residence for the younger children that was located across from the Moulin at Quatorze on the Quai du Port. I walked over there and I saw Paulette outside with the other children. Paulette recognized me as I was walking over and she came over to meet me. We hugged and kissed and then we started walking around in the Promenade Sancerre, which was the park that was in front of Quatorze. I felt heartbroken when I saw my sister. My joy in being reunited with Paulette was tempered by the sorrow that I felt because nobody else in our family was there with us and except for Jacques our family would never be together again.

Paulette was seven and one-half years old. I asked her where she had been since I left her, Nathan and Annette at the Rue Lamarck. She said that the last thing she remembered was being in the hospital, and then afterwards she didn't know what had happened. She didn't remember anything that happened either before or after she went to the hospital; she just blanked out, and two years of her memory were gone. She told me, however, that she remembered that Nathan came to the hospital where she was staying, and he waved good-bye to her through the window. She remembered that and nothing else.

My friend Trudy was one of the girls from the Moulin who used to go over to Quatorze during the day to help take care of Paulette and the other younger children. The children would come over to have their meals in the big dining room at the Moulin before the older children had their meals, and then they would go back to Quatorze. Trudy and the other girls kept the children busy all day. I saw Paulette practically every day. We went on walks to town



together. Whenever I had a few francs in my pocket I took Paulette to my favorite patisserie and I let her pick out whatever she wanted.

There is a short brick retaining wall that runs along the length of the Promenade Sancerre to the west of the Moulin. The retaining wall used to block the waters of the Tarn River from the area of the Promenade, but today a large section of the river bed has been covered with fill and landscaped with a grass lawn and trees. I wanted to give Paulette a present for the birthdays that I had missed and for her birthday that was coming up in April of 1946. I had no money to buy a present, but I did have a stamp collection that I had started soon after I arrived at the Moulin. I kept my stamp collection in a metal box. I wrapped it up and took Paulette to the brick retaining wall. We sat on the top of the wall and I handed her the present. I told her "I'd like you to have my stamps, I want to give it to you as a birthday present." She smiled and thanked me for the present.

There was an organization in the United States that "adopted" war orphans by mail. Each member of the organization was given the name of a child and they wrote letters and sent care packages of food and clothing to that child. One lady named Gertrude Price, who lived in Brooklyn, New York, adopted Paulette by mail. Miss Price sent Paulette letters and packages. One of the packages was filled with sweaters that were too large for Paulette. She gave the sweaters to me and I in turn gave them away to the other children at the Moulin. Miss Price was a school teacher and she lived on Carroll Street in the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn near Eastern Parkway. Her father was a sofer, a specially trained individual who is devout and knowledgeable in the laws governing the proper writing and assembling of a Torah scroll. No instrument containing iron or steel may be used in the creation of a Torah scroll, because those metals are used to create instruments of war. Miss Price lived in a beautiful house with an extensive library of Hebrew books. Her kindness and generosity to Paulette led to a close bond with her, Paulette, Jacques and me that lasted for the rest of Miss Price's life. All of us went to visit her at her home in Brooklyn.

#### **D.    *PAULETTE DOBBER***

The mild winter in the Midi-Pyrénées region of France where Moissac was located began to turn to spring. In February or March

of 1946 I received a letter from Jacques. Mother's older sister Rachel Ast lived in London, England with her daughters and son, cousins Kitty, Sally and Mick. Kitty and her husband Joe Dobber were childless. Sally and her husband Alf Morris had a son, cousin Martin, who was about my age. Mick and Frieda Ast were also childless. Cousins Kitty and Joe Dobber wanted to adopt Paulette. Our first cousin Kitty was going to become Paulette's mother, and our Aunt Rachel was going to become her grandmother. Kitty was born in 1906 and she was five years younger than Mother.

The office at the Moulin told me that the arrangements were being made for Paulette to go to London and they wanted me to take my sister to Paris. They gave me a passport and train tickets to Paris. Paulette and I left Moissac together. When we arrived in Paris I took Paulette by the Metro to Cousin Joseph Rychner's apartment where we met him and his soon-to-be wife, also named Paulette. Their apartment was on the Rue Faidherbe, between the Rue du Faubourg Saint-Antoine and the Rue de Charrone in the 11<sup>th</sup> arrondissement, just east of the Place de la Bastille and the Marais. Jacques met us at Joseph's apartment and all three of the surviving Szklarz children were reunited.

Cousin Joseph told me the story of how he got captured. He was a machine gunner in the French army on the front line opposite the German army. He fired his machine gun when he saw that the Germans were firing theirs. The Captain from his company came over to him and he pulled out his gun and said to Joseph, "I didn't order you to fire on them." Joseph responded, "Captain, the Germans are there." The Captain said, "I don't care, I said stop firing." Joseph obeyed and his outfit was surrendered to the Germans. I thought back to the road in Virolet, where I saw the French soldiers dumping gasoline and abandoning their positions in the face of the advancing German soldiers. The Germans used Joseph as slave labor to manufacture war materials in a Volkswagen factory. He spoke several languages and he was put to work as an interpreter in the factory.

I stayed over one night with Jacques in a hotel in Paris. I returned to Moissac the next day. Paulette was very quiet and she didn't say anything to me about going to London to be adopted by cousins Kitty and Joe Dobber. She had to stay in Paris with Joseph and Paulette for a while until all of the arrangements for her to go to

London were completed. When everything was ready, a friend or acquaintance of Kitty and Joe took Paulette from Paris to London. Years later, Paulette told me that she didn't want to be separated from me and Jacques, and that she had wanted to stay with us in France. The situation was impossible. Jacques was 20 years old and he was struggling to find his way and to build a life in post-war France. I was 16 years old and I was learning a trade and living in Moissac. Jacques and I could not take care of Paulette and provide her with the future that she deserved. Sending her to our family in London was the best and only option that was available. The relief organizations that were working to help the war orphans were trying to reunite them with whatever family they had left in the hope that there would be a connection and an opportunity for a new life. Cousins Kitty and Joe did a wonderful thing when they adopted Paulette. They had a good life in London, there were other family members there, and they all made Paulette a part of their lives. Jacques and I were grateful that our sister would be taken care of by our family in London and that they would provide her with the chance to build a new life for herself.





Paulette Dobber (Szklarz)  
London, England 1948/49





London, England 1947



London, England  
around 1955

## *CHAPTER XII*

### *MY FUTURE*

#### *A. BORIS GINODMAN*

Paulette was on her way to London. I was back in Moissac and I knew what I had to do.

The EIF and Shatta and Bouli had found some of the finest craftsmen available to teach at the Centre Maurice et Daniel Fleg trade school. Boris Ginodman was one of those talented teachers. Boris taught menuiserie (cabinet making) and he ran the wood shop at Dix Huit. He was in charge of the entire operation.

As far as I knew, either from what Boris had told me or what I learned from others, Boris Ginodman was born in Russia. He was an economist in White Russia, a region that is now known as Belorussia. When the communists won the civil war (1918-1923) Boris moved to Berlin, Germany. Boris was fluent in several languages including Russian, German and French. Boris moved to Switzerland when Hitler came to power. While Boris was in Switzerland he took up cabinet making as a hobby and he became quite good at it. He was an excellent wood carver and he was adept at handling all of the tools, but he was an even better teacher. He knew how to evaluate his students properly and he had a knack about inspiring us and encouraging us to be better craftsmen. Boris was a very, very, very good man.

The wood shop was in an old converted apartment building on the Quai du Port that was called Dix Huit. The building had a courtyard in the center and there was a big pile of rubble in the courtyard. One time I moved some of the rubble and I found a cache of rusted pistols.

I went to the wood shop after breakfast and attended class from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., Monday to Friday. There was a lunch break for a couple of hours, and then I returned to the shop for the remainder of the day. The rooms in the shop were fitted out with cabinet making benches and they had all of the necessary hand tools. The classes were tailored to each student's knowledge and ability, from beginner to more advanced classes. Boris observed and talked to each one of his students and he evaluated us. I worked my way up and as I got better and better and when I showed some talent Boris placed me in the more advanced classes. The rooms downstairs at Dix Huit were equipped with some basic electrical machines, including a combination table saw, a shaper, a plane saw and a band saw. Only the older and more qualified students were allowed to use the machines. Boris wanted all his students to first become skilled with hand tools, and we even had to learn how to make some of the common hand tools, before he allowed us to work on the machines.

When I started learning cabinet making from Boris, he gave me a metal saw blade and I had to make my own frame saw. He also gave me a blade for a hand plane and I had to make the wood block for the plane. I was taught how to use the wood plane to face-off a piece of lumber, how to glue wood together, how to size things up, how to make tongues and grooves, splines, angles and dovetails. Little by little, I learned all of the skills that were needed to be a cabinet maker. I was also taught how to sharpen my saws, planes and chisels. The shop had a basic old-fashioned water wheel. The sharpening stone spun through a container of water driven by a bicycle chain and crank and it turned as fast as I could peddle. I had to sharpen my own tools; nobody would do it for me. I was taught how to work with wood veneers, to do patterns, and to glue the veneers together. I was also taught how to make my own plywood. I heated up metal plates and used hot glue to put sheets of wood veneers together, then I clamped the sandwich together and put pressure on it by placing the sheet on a platform on the floor and putting pressure on it by jamming it tight with two-by-fours that ran from the floor up to the ceiling. In addition to working in the wood shop, I also took classes in drafting and detailing. When Boris decided that I was ready, he brought me downstairs to watch the older students working the machines, and then he taught me how to use each of the machines.

Boris also took us on interesting field trips. We spent a day at a saw mill and lumberyard on the outside of Moissac watching how a mill worked. They brought in trunks of trees and sawed them up into planks.

There were shops and factories in town that had woodworking machines. We went there and the owners explained everything to us. One of the interesting things that I saw was a big band saw that worked without electricity. It had a large wheel with a counterbalance and a handle on it. An apprentice would turn the wheel by hand to run the band saw. I thought it was archaic, but it worked. We also visited a wooden toy factory. We spent a day there watching how they made all of the wooden toys. There was also a very good cabinet making company in town. It was small and it was several hundred years old. The wood that it used to manufacture furniture was primarily exotic woods, oak and walnut. All of the wood was cut into lengths and milled into the thicknesses and quantities that were needed for the different pieces of furniture that the shop made, such as a wardrobe or an armoire. They were then stored in the attic for drying so that the wood wouldn't crack in the finished furniture pieces. Some of the wood had been seasoning in the attic for more than one hundred years. Whole trees were cut, milled and stored in the attic so that the grain of the wood would match when the furniture was made. Back in those days, pieces of furniture were made from the wood of a single tree. When a piece was ordered, the shop retrieved the exact amount of matched lumber from storage in the attic. Everything was done properly, in the right way. Boris also took us to the furniture factory where the German POWs worked on the other side of the Pont Napoleon.

Boris taught me how to finish furniture properly. The process known as French polishing produced a high gloss finish on the furniture. The wood surface was cleaned and sanded down with the finest sandpaper. The surface was gone over with a rag with hot water to raise the pores, and then it was sanded again. A thin coat of shellac was applied to the furniture. Then we used a tampon, which was linen with wool on the inside to make a ball, and we put alcohol inside of the tampon and then started making circles with it to even out the shellac. The surface was sanded again, and the process of applying shellac and smoothing and sanding was repeated over and over again until the glossy surface was built up. The process was time consuming, but it was the best way to produce a fine furniture finish in an era when sophisticated chemical finishes were not yet available.

We made some interesting pieces in the shop. The advanced students took on a project to make a Torah Ark for the Moulin. They were principally involved with the project, but I helped with some gluing,



preparations for the paneling and some parts that the older guys finished off. The ark was made out of oak paneling with carvings. Boris was also involved because the ark required a lot of carving. Boris put the finishing touches to the complicated parts of the carvings and it came out beautifully.

Boris said that we were going to make a piece of furniture for Shatta and Bouli. It was Alf Gilbert's project, but everybody helped out and contributed. The piece was covered with old-fashioned marquetry veneer with inlays. I worked on the marquetry veneer. It was quite nice and Shatta and Bouli appreciated the gift.

As usual, there was also some kidding around in the shop. We always tried to pull pranks. My roommate Louis Schloss was building something on his workbench which was a few feet away from my workbench. Louis had some dovetails in the rear vice on his bench and he was having trouble joining them; he had made them too tight. I looked over and said, "Louis, why don't you put some grease in there, it will go in better." Louis said to me, "That's a good idea." So he put some grease in the dovetails and then I told him, "You know, now that you put grease in, how are you going to glue it together? It's not going to stick together!" Louis got angry at me.

Boris told us that there was going to be a competition held in Toulouse for cabinet making apprentices from trade schools in the south of France. He said to me, "How about making the same piece we did for Shatta and Bouli?" That became my project to exhibit at the competition in Toulouse. It took me several months to complete the project. I was learning and I was not under the same time pressures that a commercial project would be subject to. I worked very hard on the piece to duplicate it like the one that we had made for Shatta and Bouli and it came out beautifully. I started with rough lumber purchased from the sawmill and I used it to make all of the parts that were needed for the finished project. I did all of the marquetry, all the lathe, the pied galbé (literally bowed feet but actually, curved French style furniture legs), the inlays and the finishing.

When the day of the competition arrived, we loaded my piece on a truck and Boris drove a few of the guys and me to Toulouse. There was a big crowd at the competition. We had a spot and we showed the furniture that I had made. At the end of the day it was announced that I had won the first prize. A few hours later the competition's organizers said that they had decided to extend the competition for a second day

because they wanted to bring other apprentices in to show their work. We needed to find a place to spend the night because we had planned on returning to Moissac after the competition ended. There was a villa in Toulouse that was used as a home for Jewish children and the organization that ran it said that we could stay there for the night. We went to the villa and learned that during the war it had been used by the Gestapo. The organization that now ran it was told that nothing should be removed or changed in the building. Some of the kids who lived there took me around and they showed me what the building had been used for. Upstairs in one of the rooms there were wooden ceiling beams with butcher hooks. The Gestapo hung prisoners in that room and interrogated them there.

The next day I went back to the competition. An apprentice who worked in a regular cabinet shop and not at a trade school displayed his furniture at the competition for the first time on the extra day that had been added. Sure enough, it was announced that he got the first prize. I felt slighted and I was disappointed. I got back into the truck with the other students from the Moulin and Boris drove us back to Moissac. Centre Bayard was about two or three miles from where the competition was held, but I didn't go back. I had no desire to go back at that time. I somehow wanted to forget the past and get into the future.

Shatta and Bouli gave me a prize of a drafting kit which I still have today in appreciation for my effort in the competition. I spoke with Boris about what happened. I got angry. I told him, "I'm quitting. I'm quitting. I don't want to be a cabinet maker anymore." But Boris talked me out of quitting. He had something else in mind for me. He was sending me to Paris to continue my apprenticeship in a real furniture factory.

For the fifth time since my parents had been deported, I boarded a train that was headed to Paris. The Moulin made arrangements for me to stay in a castle in a southern banlieue (suburb) of Paris. The castle was being used as a home for Jewish children who were also doing apprenticeships in various trades in the Paris region. I was assigned a bunk bed to sleep in. The castle provided me with milk and coffee and a baguette for breakfast. Dinner consisted of bread and cans of tuna fish. I commuted back and forth to Paris, taking a suburban train between the castle and the Gare Montparnasse and then taking the Paris Metro to the small cabinet shop where I would be working. The shop was located on the Avenue Phillipe-Auguste in the 11eme arrondissement. The

Avenue Phillipe-Auguste radiated north from the Place de Nation until it terminated near the Cimetière Père-Lachaise. The cemetery is the final resting place for many luminaries from politics and the arts, among them the artist Camille Pissarro.

The cabinet shop made custom furniture. Every piece was made by hand to order and nothing was bought except for the rough lumber. There was a finisher and three or four cabinet makers. Monsieur Goldenberg owned the shop and he also worked there. The first day I got to the shop -- and I got there on time -- I spoke to Monsieur Goldenberg. He showed me around the shop and I asked him, "Are there no machines?" He said, "No. Everything is done by hand here. If we need machines, there is a machine shop in the neighborhood." The cabinet makers laid out the work and made a stock list. They then leased time in the machine shop by the hour. The head mechanic knew all the sizes. The cabinet makers marked off all of the wood and put it on a cart. I pushed the cart to the machine shop. The cabinet makers spent a few hours in the machine shop machining all the parts. When they were done, we'd load the parts back on the cart and return to the cabinet making shop to make all of the joints and assemble and finish the furniture.

In those days, there was no plywood to be bought and the plywood for the furniture had to be made by hand. That was done in the evening. I had learned how to make plywood at the Moulin, and one of my jobs as an apprentice was to help make the plywood. I stayed in the shop at least two or three hours after everyone except for one mechanic had left. I assisted the mechanic. The shop had an oven that was used to heat up zinc plates. I heated up the oven and oiled and then warmed the zinc plates. I prepared the cores of poplar wood and the wood veneers for the custom sized plywood. There was no waste, and the plywood was manufactured specifically for the furniture that it would be used for, such as a table top or the top and sides of a wardrobe. I helped the mechanic to put the glue on the core and the veneers, assemble them into plywood, and then we put the plywood into a press between the heated zinc plates. The press squeezed the plywood overnight. In the morning we opened up the press and the plywood was ready to be trimmed and used to make the furniture.

Although I never completed a finished furniture product by myself, I had my eyes open on how everything was done in the shop.

Monsieur Goldenberg told me where he wanted me to help out. He gave me blades and wood to make my own wood planes. After giving me those parts he said, "Some of the guys have planes. Take your measurements and make your own tools." I liked that. I took the wood and I borrowed a long plane and a short plane. I measured and roughed out duplicates with the wood that I had been given, finished the blocks and fitted them with the blades. He also gave me two blades to make my own saws. All apprentices were required to make their own tools. Monsieur Goldenberg was very nice to me. The first day that we met he said to me, "You know, you're going to come home with me for lunch." He lived on the first floor of a building diagonally across the street from the shop. He added to his invitation, "but don't tell the other guys, they're going to get jealous." Every day during my apprenticeship I had lunch with Monsieur Goldenberg and his wife. She prepared nice big lunches and the breaks were long, about two hours. Those delicious lunches became my main meal of the day during the six weeks that I was an apprentice in Paris.

I didn't make any new friends at the castle. Everybody was too busy and going in different directions at different times. My apprenticeship in Paris lasted for about six weeks.

My feelings about returning to Rue Lamarck and L'École de Travail had not changed since I went to Paris to attend the Jamboree Saint Georges. I never felt like going back to those places. I feared going back because I knew what had happened and I couldn't face it again. The war was over and mentally I was trying to look forward to the future, and I didn't want to be caught up with the old and the new. I was safe now, and I didn't feel that I would be safe if I returned to places where I had been during the war and from where my friends and family had been taken and murdered. My future was my apprenticeship as a cabinet maker, and I was totally focused on that.

Boris Ginodman had other talents that he shared with the children of the Moulin. He was a very active man and he was very involved with the kids and worked hard to make sure we all had a positive experience at the Moulin. Besides being an economist and a teacher, Boris was a man of the arts. He loved to put on plays and he organized plays that were performed in different languages. The Moulin had a room with a stage that we used for the performances. Boris did everything. He supervised the construction of the props, he wrote the scripts and composed the lyrics and he was the producer and the director of the plays.



He taught us to speak and sing the scripts phonetically if we didn't know the language. He wrote out the words and told us how to say them and how to move our mouths. He had us repeat the words until they made sense and sounded right. Boris was very patient and very talented and the kids loved working with him on the shows. One of the plays was a comedy in German and it was about a professor. I played the role of the professor. My partner was another friend from the Moulin, Ida Tieder. Boris gave me his coat to wear as my costume. Another one of the shows was a musical that we performed in Russian. The show was something about the Cossacks or the Russian army on horses. We rode on imaginary horses and sang about the beautiful plains and countryside of Russia. Again, Boris taught us how to sing Russian phonetically.

The Moulin gave me a home, and Boris Ginodman and the Centre Maurice et Daniel Fleg trade school gave me a future. The knowledge and skills that I learned in Moissac helped me greatly. I was given the ability to move on with the rest of my life and to earn a good living wherever I might go. Everything that Boris taught me I put to use to support myself for the rest of my life, and to raise my family. The people who ran and organized the Moulin, and teachers like Boris Ginodman, did a good thing.

## **B.     *AUNT RACHEL AST***

When I was at the Rue Lamarck I had imagined escaping to London on an airplane made out of produce crates and powered by rubber bands. Now I had my chance to really go to London. The Jewish relief agencies were continuing with their efforts to reunite Jewish children with their relatives. Several girls at the Moulin and I had relatives in England. Shatta and Bouli told us that we could go to England to visit our relatives and they gave us tickets for the trip. The return ticket was an open ticket and we could stay as long as I wanted and come back to the Moulin whenever we wanted to return. The girls and I took the train together from Moissac to Paris -- my sixth train trip to Paris -- and when we arrived at the railroad station I knew the way to go. We used the Metro to get to the Gare de Nord, which was next to the Gare de l'Est which I had used to go to Metz to visit Jacques. We took the train from the Gare de Nord to Dunkirk. At Dunkirk we boarded a boat that took us across the Strait of Dover to Dover, England. When we arrived in Dover we took a train to London. A group of people from British Jewish agencies were

waiting for us and they took us to a big empty dormitory and said that we could sleep there as long as we wanted to stay in London. They gave us dinner that night and told us that in the morning we were going to visit London City Hall and meet the Lord Mayor of London. In the morning we got up, ate breakfast and then our British hosts took us on a bus to London City Hall, which I now believe is actually called Mansion House. We were taken into a big, beautiful, ornate chamber, and we were all sitting there and sure enough, the big doors opened up and a gentleman dressed up in fancy garb came over to us and he greeted each one of us. The Lord Mayor spoke to us in French, which he spoke very well. We were with him for about an hour. He asked us about the Moulin and told us about his position as Lord Mayor. When the visit was over we were taken back to the dorm and we had dinner. They told us that our relatives would arrive in the morning to pick us up.

Paulette and Kitty came to the dormitory in the morning. Paulette recognized me and we hugged. We spoke to each other in French because I could not speak a word of English. But when Paulette spoke to Kitty she spoke in English. In just a few months she had become conversant in English. Paulette had also grown up physically in that time. She was now a big girl. Kitty spoke some French and she told me that Paulette went to school immediately after she arrived in England and within weeks she was speaking English. They lived in a suburb of northwest London called Canons Park. We went to their house at 4 Wildcroft Gardens. I met Joe Dobber and all of my English cousins at the house. And I met my Aunt Rachel. I looked at her and she had the same face as my mother. She even sounded like my mother when she spoke. Aunt Rachel had those Rychner eyes, as did my cousins Kitty, Sally, Mick and Martin. Aunt Rachel was much older than my mother, but there was no doubting that they were sisters.

Aunt Rachel also cooked some things just like my mother cooked. But there was one thing that she made for me that my mother never cooked. The day after I arrived, Aunt Rachel prepared a kipper for my breakfast. A kipper is a whole herring fish that has been sliced in half from head to tail, gutted, then salted or pickled and smoked. It is oily and pungent. I really didn't like it, but I was being polite and I ate it. Then my aunt asked me if I liked the kipper, "It was good?" I said, "Yeah, it was good." She said, "Okay," and she went back into the kitchen and returned with another kipper for me. I ate it.

Alternating between French, Yiddish and English, with Paulette, Kitty and Sally taking turns as amateur translators, I was able to communicate with my family during my stay in England. They had learned from speaking with Jacques over the telephone what had happened to our family in France. I told them all about my ordeal and what had happened to me. Everybody was so good to me. Paulette went to school, and I saw her when she came home when school was out for the day and on the weekends.

Aunt Rachel was a widow. She and her husband had a millinery business in the London neighborhood of Battersea. They manufactured and sold ladies hats. Cousins Kitty and Sally ran the millinery business. They purchased blanks from manufacturers and then they folded them and sewed all of the ornaments onto the blanks. They were very pretty hats; my cousins were very talented. Aunt Rachel was retired from the business. She took me shopping with her. She said, "Come with me," so I went. We had a few bundles with us and we had to take the bus. But Aunt Rachel would never wait on the queue. She went right to the front of the queue. No one said anything. She was an old lady. It was funny. Aunt Rachel gave me a silver cigarette case as a present and I still have it. I still hadn't learned to like smoking cigarettes since the German soldier gave me a Turkish cigarette back in Virolet.

Joe Dobber was a tailor and he worked for a company that made men's suits. Joe was British and he was working as an apprentice in the garment district in New York City when World War I broke out. When the United States entered the war, Joe volunteered and he enlisted in the United States Army even though he was from England. He was sent to fight in France and he returned to England after World War I ended. Joe had a pair of gold cufflinks and he said that he wanted me to have them as a gift. I kept the cufflinks for many years until I gave them to my son Ted.

Alf Morris was an entrepreneur. He bought and sold jewelry. At one time Cousin Sally had her own millinery shop, but she closed it and turned it into a produce shop. Alf was involved with running the produce shop. Alf told me that when he was young he was a professional boxer and he made money from boxing. He showed me his nose and pushed it in with a finger. His nose flattened out and he said, "See that? I used to box." Alf and Sally's son Martin was still a student in school. Martin tried so hard to explain to me the British game of cricket and to make me understand the game. I didn't fully understand it, but he tried. Martin

didn't speak any French and I didn't speak any English, but he still tried very hard to explain cricket to me.

Mick Ast served in the British Army during World War II and he had recently returned to England. He was a Staff Sergeant in communications and he was stationed in India throughout the war. Mick was discharged from the Army around the same time that India was preparing for its independence from Great Britain. He was offered a rank as an officer in the Indian Army if he stayed in India, but he turned it down and returned to London. Mick was an accountant and he worked for a candy company. Mick's wife Frieda was a seamstress and she worked for a company that made dresses and their clients included the Royal Family.

A few days after I arrived Alf said to me, "You need some clothes." He said, "Come with me." I went shopping with Alf to some merchants that he knew and he bought me a sport jacket, new pants and a belt, shoes, socks and shirts. He took good care of me and gave me a whole new getup. It was very nice of him. When I went to London with Alf or with my other cousins I saw some of the damage that the city sustained during World War II. Buildings were bombed out and large parts of the city were still in ruins. It wasn't a very pretty sight to see.

One day I was talking to my family about what I was doing in Moissac. I told them that I was learning how to become a cabinet maker and I described some of the things that they were teaching me at the trade school, including French polishing. Cousin Alf heard that and he said to me, "Come here, I want to show you something." He showed me the dining room table which had an old top and the finish was all gone and damaged. Alf asked me, "Can you fix that?" I told him that I could fix it, but I needed supplies to do it. Alf took me to a hardware store and I found what I needed to do the job. When we came back to the house I got to work. I sanded down the top and I re-polished it the way that Boris had taught me to do it. I fixed it up and it looked like it was brand new. Everybody was very happy with the work that I did.

Before I left Moissac to go on my trip to London, Boris asked me to do something for him while I was there. He wanted me to buy tools for the school that were manufactured in England, including high quality wood carving tools that were called Sheffields. Boris gave me money and he told me to buy as many tools as I could with the amount of money that he gave me. Alf took me out shopping to several hardware stores and I found one where I bought all kinds of v-parting tools, chisels and



gouges to bring back to the school. I bought the carving tools without the handles because we could buy or make the wooden handles ourselves in France.

The time came when I decided that I had to return to Moissac and get back to the classes at my trade school. Cousins Sally and Alf took me aside to talk to me. They told me, "We would like to adopt you. Would you like to stay in London?" I was deeply appreciative of their kind offer, but I was already seventeen years old. I thanked my cousins but I said "No." I didn't yet know where my future would be, but I had a strong sense that it would not be in England. Paulette found her home in England. I would have to find my home somewhere else.

Paulette came with me to the train station. It wasn't too pleasant to have to leave her, Aunt Rachel, and all of my cousins and we said a tearful goodbye. After a whole day's journey, I arrived back in Moissac. I delivered the fine English carving tools to my teacher Boris and he was very happy to have them. Soon after I returned to the Moulin I learned where my future would be. Six years after I said goodbye to Paulette and to Aunt Rachel and my cousins in London, I returned to England to see them again. This time I was not wearing the uniform of a boy scout from the Moulin de Moissac. Instead I was wearing the uniform of a soldier in the United States Army. And I had learned how to smoke cigarettes.

## *CHAPTER XIII*

### *MEILLEUR SOUVENIRS*

### *(BEST MEMORIES)*

#### *A. LAFAYETTE*

The Moulin was only a temporary home. We were expected to be ready to leave to live our own lives by the time we were eighteen years old. There was also talk that the Moulin was going to be closed and that the home for Jewish children would be moved to the Château de Laversine north of Paris. The Rothschild family reclaimed the Château after the war and they donated it to be used as a home for Jewish orphans.

My eighteenth birthday was on July 10, 1947. Some of my friends had already left the Moulin. John and Paul Levie told me that they were moving to New York with their mother and younger brother Freddy. I felt bad. We had spent some rough times together and now they were leaving. Many others also left for America, including Edith Loeb, Trudy Elkan and Louis Schloss. They had relatives in America whom they contacted and arrangements were made for them to immigrate there. Some of the boys left and moved to Paris. They found apartments and moved in together and tried to find jobs to support themselves. In 1947 the United Nations was debating the partition of Palestine and the creation of the State of Israel. The creation of an independent Jewish state was imminent. Another contingent at the Moulin decided to go to Israel. My friend Lynx bid us farewell and he went to Israel. Charles Klein also went to Israel.

I was debating whether I should go to Israel or stay in France. Because many of the guys wanted to go to Israel, I figured that I would go with everybody to Israel. But there was another possible option for me in France. André-Charles Boulle was a famous cabinet maker and marquetry artist during the reign of King Louis XIV. When I was an apprentice in Paris my furniture shop was near the Place de Nation. Also near the Place de Nation and on a street off of the Boulevard Diderot there was and still is a college of fine arts and crafts and applied arts that was founded in 1886 and is named after André-Charles Boulle. The École Boulle is one of the preeminent schools in France for cabinet making and furniture design as well as other fine arts and crafts. Only the best of the best would be accepted there. The school produced fine craftsmen and managers who ran businesses and who designed and created furniture. I wanted to create new pieces and new designs. I thought that I might have a chance of being accepted and I considered applying for admission there.

Marie-Joseph Paul Yves Roch Gilbert du Motier, Marquis de Lafayette, is known to all Americans simply as Lafayette and as a hero of the American Revolution. Lesser known is the fact that during his military career in France Lafayette was transferred to a command that was known as the “Regiment de Noailles.” The Regiment was stationed in Metz and it was commanded by the Count de Broglie. The Count was an admirer of Lafayette’s father and he invited Lafayette to all of the parties and dinners that he gave. In August of 1775 the Count hosted a dinner party in honor of the Duke of Gloucester who was the younger brother of King George III of England. The Duke spoke about the budding rebellion in the American colonies, and Lafayette listened intently. From that moment on, Lafayette determined that he would join the American rebels and help them fight for their freedom.<sup>28</sup>

Jacques wrote me a letter telling me that he thought we should go to America. I told him that I didn’t want to go to America. He said well, for him, he didn’t want to stay in France anymore. There were too many bad memories, and he felt that we should go to America. He said to me, “If you don’t want to go, then I’m not going either.” He told me that he was having a hard time finding himself. He went back and forth between Paris and Metz, working on upholstery in Paris and finding other odd jobs in Metz. He wasn’t comfortable in France anymore and he wanted to find some new

opportunities in America. I saw that Jacques was unhappy, so I said, “Okay, I’ll go,” figuring that I’ll go with him to New York and after he got established then I would leave and return to France. Jacques was happy that I decided to go with him. The two brothers from Metz were going to live in America, a nation that won its liberty with the help of a soldier who learned about the American Revolution when he was stationed in Metz.

The Moulin had been my home for three years. As we all said our goodbyes, one by one, it was a sad thing. We lived together for many years in a friendly environment, and it felt like we were leaving our brothers and sisters behind. One part of my life was over, and I was going to continue on to other things. Some of the members of the Patrouille des Mangoustes started writing goodbye comments in the “Livre Taillis des Mangouste.” I was the custodian of the diary and my farewell note is the final entry: “Meilleur Souvenirs de ma vie en cette Patrouille” “Best Memories of my life in this Patrol.”

Tante Gitla Kapelmeister – Aunt Gertrude – and her three children, cousins Irving, Betty and Jeanne, immigrated from Metz to America in 1934. They changed their surname to Kopan and they lived in New York City. Jacques contacted them and they agreed to sponsor our immigration to America. They provided the authorities with affidavits showing how much money they had in the bank and stating that they would take care of us if we could not find employment to support ourselves in America. The office at the Moulin told me that I had to rejoin my brother in Paris where we would get our visas to enter America.

In October of 1947 I said my final goodbyes to my friends who had not yet left the Moulin. I packed my clothes, including the new wardrobe that Cousin Alf bought me in London. I gathered my few possessions, consisting of some photographs from Toulouse and Moissac, the Kodak camera, my drafting set, my father’s watch and my cousin’s cufflinks, and I packed them too. As I walked to the Moissac train station I paused to look back at the Moulin one last time. I also walked past Quatorze where Paulette had lived and past Dix Huit where I learned how to be a cabinet maker. At the Pont Napoléon I turned right on to the Rue du Pont and continued on towards the station. For the seventh and last time in my young life I boarded a train that was bound for Paris.

I returned to Moissac and to the Moulin in 2012, sixty-five years after I left. Quatorze and Dix Huit are still there, although they have long



since been put to different uses. The Quai du Port in front of the buildings was renamed in 2004. It is now known as Place Bouli et Shatta Simon. A plaque honoring Bouli and Shatta has been affixed to the base of the Pont Napoléon at the plaza. Photographs of Bouli and Shatta are printed on the plaque and the following words are engraved underneath their images:

With the help of the people of Moissac, and in spite of danger,  
they were able to save hundreds of Jewish children from Nazi  
barbarism.

A second plaque is next to the plaque for Bouli and Shatta and it honors the people of Moissac:

Honor and Recognition to the People  
of Moissac

Who protected, helped and saved hundreds of young Jewish children  
and adolescents during the dark years of the German Occupation

Honor and Recognition to the Valliant Women and Men of this City  
Who Opened Their Hearts and Their Homes To Those Persecuted  
During the Nazi Barbarism

The Elders of Moissac and All Children of Deportees

December 5, 1939 – December 5, 1950

As of 2015 ten persons from Moissac have been recognized by Yad Vashem with the title of Righteous Among the Nations for saving at their peril the lives of Jewish people. In 2013 the park that I looked out at from the window of my room, and where I snacked on marrow bones with John and Paul Levie, was named the Esplanade of the Righteous. In 2015 Moissac was integrated into the network called the “Cities and Villages of the Justes of France.”

The Moulin has been renovated and converted into a hotel. The dining room where I ate Madame Wolf’s kosher meals for three years and where the boys of the Moulin and I had our bar mitzvah ceremony is now

an elegant restaurant. I sat down for lunch in the restaurant with my oldest son Traitel [Theodore] and his wife Madelyn. As we dined on our fine French meal I shared with them my best memories of the Moulin de Moissac.

## **B.     *TOUR EIFFEL***

Jacques had a room in a hotel on the Rue de Prague, near the Gare de Lyon. I met him there. We had appointments at the American Consulate to get our visas. There was a doctor at the Consulate and he gave us physical exams. We then had to go for interviews. The French-speaking interviewer asked me what I was going to do in America. I said that I was an accomplished cabinet maker and that I would have no problems finding work. I added that my brother was an accomplished upholsterer and he would also be able to find work. Several days later, we had our visas.

The Jewish relief agency that Jacques contacted to help us with the immigration process supplied us with tickets on a ship to America. They also gave us \$50.00 each for pocket money and they said, “Don’t spend it, otherwise, you’re going to wind up on Ellis Island.” I didn’t know what Ellis Island was. Anyway, I didn’t spend it.

Jacques and I spent several days in Paris together. We went to museums and we saw some plays. Jacques said to me, “Before we leave Paris, let’s go up the Tour Eiffel [Eiffel Tower], because when you get to America, somebody is going to ask, ‘Were you ever in the Eiffel Tower?’.” We took the Metro to the Place du Trocadéro. The Palais de Chaillot is at the Place du Trocadéro and we saw an exhibition there. The plaza in front of the Palais de Chaillot has one of the most spectacular views of the Eiffel Tower in all of Paris. We walked to the Tower and crossed the Seine on the Pont d’Iéna. We went up the Tower as far as we could go at that time. To this day, seventy years after I went up the Eiffel Tower, no one has ever asked me if I went up the Eiffel Tower when I lived in France, never, never. I sometimes bring it up myself and kiddingly ask people to ask me if I ever went up the Eiffel Tower. Nobody ever asks.

I met three of Jacques’ friends in Paris and he took a picture of us with the Kodak camera. Then Jacques took one last picture of me in Paris; au revoir Paris. I was dressed up in the sharp suit of clothes that Cousin Alf bought me in London. We went to say goodbye to Cousin

Joseph. I also went to visit some of the boys from the Moulin, who had moved to Paris, to say goodbye to them. They tried to talk me out of going to America. They said, “Don’t go, don’t go. Stay here with us. We’re all working in very fine leather goods doing ladies’ pocketbooks and the pay is very high. We’ll take you in, we’ll teach you the trade. Stay in Paris, don’t go to America.” I told them thanks, but I said that I was going to America. I also said, “I may be back.” I had in my pocket an aller retour, which was a round trip ticket for the Paris Metro. I took the aller retour out of my pocket and showed it to my friends. I said, “You know, I’m only using one. Next time you’ll see another punch on the ticket, I’ll be back in Paris.” I took the aller retour and put it in between the pages of the Livre Taillis des Mangouste for safe keeping. I still have that ticket. I never returned to live in France.

### **C.     *S.S. SOBIESKI***

The day came to begin our journey to America. Jacques and I shared one large suitcase and we packed it tightly. Our passage was booked on a ship called the S.S. Sobieski and the ship was departing from Cannes on the Mediterranean coast in the south of France. We took an early morning train to get to Cannes. We got up in the middle of the night and walked to the train station from our hotel. A group of gendarmes or police were walking towards us. When they got to us they said, “Arrête, élève les mains” “Stop, raise your hands.” We dropped our suitcase and raised our hands. They came over to us and one of them had a submachine gun trained on us. They said, “Le papier,” and we handed them our passports. They asked us where we were going and we told them that we were walking to the railroad station to take a train to Cannes. One of them said, ‘Oh, excusez-moi” “Excuse me” and they let us continue. We were not the ones they were looking for.

The train arrived in Cannes and we walked down to the pier at the harbor. The Cannes Film Festival is now held on the spot where the pier was. We were early. The ship was not leaving until later in the evening and we had some time to kill. We checked our suitcase. Jacques said, “Let’s go to Monte Carlo.” I told him that it was too far away, almost forty miles. Jacques persisted. He said that he had a few francs. He said “Let’s get a taxi. I’ve never been there.” I relented and said, “I haven’t been there either.” So we took a taxi to Monte Carlo. When we got there Jacques said, “Let’s go in the casino” and I said okay. The casino

wouldn't let us in because we weren't wearing jackets. We walked around the town instead and then took a taxi back to Cannes. We retrieved our suitcase and proceeded through customs. One of the customs agents asked me if I still had my food ration book. I said yes and he said to me, "You're going to America, right? Why don't you give them to me? You don't need it anymore and I can use it. I said "Okay" and I handed it over to him. I should have kept it as a souvenir, but he wanted it, so I gave it to him.

The S.S. Sobieski was anchored off of Cannes in the Golfe de la Napoule. It could not come into the harbor. We boarded a launch which took us out to the ship. The passengers included a few other Jewish kids like us who were immigrating to America. Most of the other passengers were young Catholic priests who were headed for America. Jacques and I were assigned bunk beds in a huge room on board that was filled with double and triple bunks. We were the only two French guys in there. All of the other bunks were occupied by the priests. Jacques and I went on deck with his bar mitzvah camera. Jacques took my picture and another passenger took a picture of Jacques and me on the deck.

Our ship set sail for America on October 21, 1947. The crossing was quite tough. The seas were rough and most of the passengers were sick throughout the voyage. Jacques was terribly sea sick, but I was fine. I think I was the only person in the dining room sometimes. The S.S. Sobieski was a Polish ship. The ship's loudspeakers played Frédéric Chopin's "Polonaises" throughout the voyage.

We arrived in Lower New York Bay on Friday night, October 31, 1947. The Captain announced that he was not going to bring the ship to dock in New York harbor that night because there was a bad storm. The ship anchored at Ambrose Light for the night and waited for the storm to subside. Jacques hadn't eaten for days and he couldn't take it anymore. He left the bunk room to get some fresh air and I followed him out on deck. The ship tipped and Jacques went flying and he slammed into the railing. I went over to him and grabbed him. I thought he was going to go overboard and I yanked him back from the railing and we returned to our bunks.

It was dead calm in the morning after the storm and the ship proceeded to its berth on the west side of Manhattan, near where the Intrepid aircraft carrier museum is located today. Jacques and I stood on the deck with some of the other French boys who were immigrating to America. As we entered New York Harbor we all gazed up at the gift of



the people of France to the American people, “La Liberté éclairant le monde.”

The Statute of Liberty was designed by French sculptor Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi and was built by another Frenchman, the brilliant engineer Gustave Eiffel. Jacques and I had just been in his Tower in Paris. At that moment I felt like I was frozen in a different zone. I didn't think that I would ever find myself going to America. The ship continued on to the pier, her long voyage through the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean almost over. America was no longer a childhood memory of looking at a neat stack of big apples -- pommes Américaine --through the window of a grocery store in Metz. I stared in awe at the massive expanse of the New York skyline as the ship gently slipped into her berth.



Lidre



Billis

des



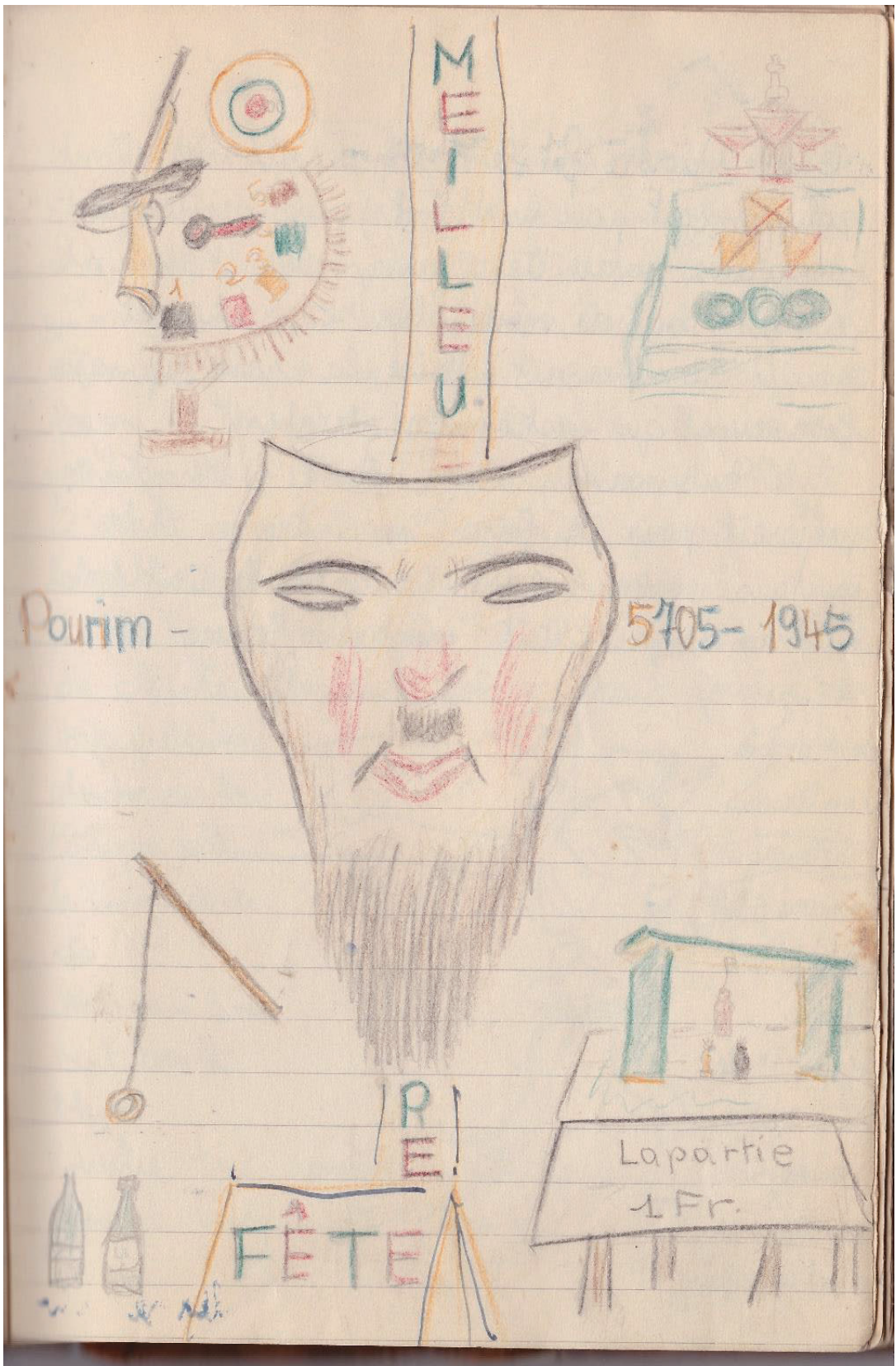


~~Pouim~~ 1945

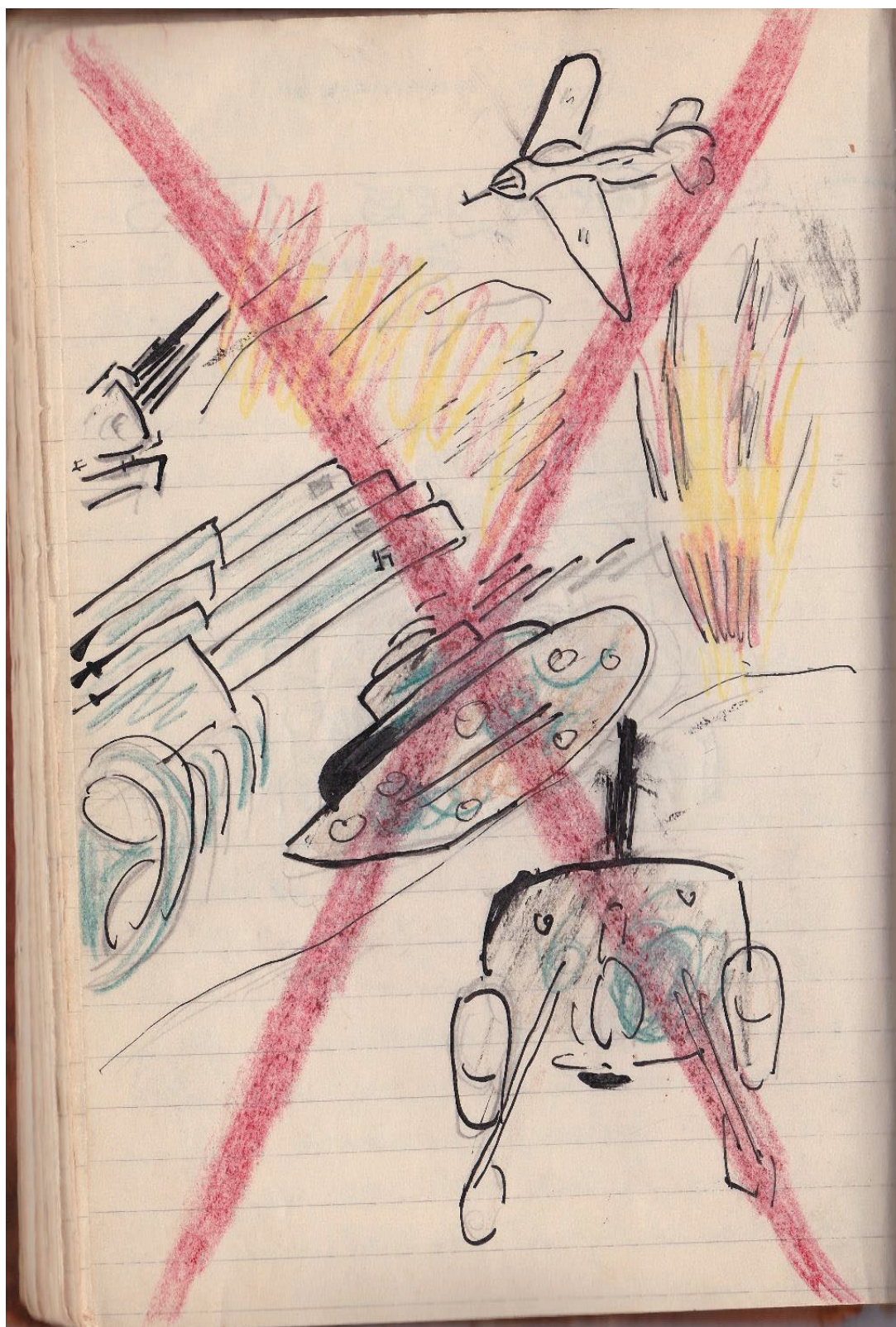
« Pouim! Pouim! » courrait de bouche en bouche. En effet le même soir à l'office on lisait la méquille. Chaque fois que le nom de Flaman était prononcé dans la salle, des bruits sonores s'élevaient. Après le souper tout le monde courrait vite dans les dortoirs pour se déguiser afin, d'être le mieux masqué et le moins reconnaissable. Le soir tout le monde entrait d'un air distingué dans la salle. Henri, annonçait que la soirée allait débuter par la présentation des chœurs, et des deux troupes. Pendant la soirée, les oînées dansèrent une sorte de danses seigneuriales.

Tout à coup des rires s'élevaient dans la salle. C'était Court qui entrait en albé. Il y avait encore d'autres déguisements très drôles. Jacques Katsouras en chef - cuisinier. Raimond en Cheftaine de Louvetoux. D'autres en Russes, Grecs, Arabes, Cosaques et tout ce qu'il y a d'imaginable. Et pièce après pièce passe sur la scène. Une après l'autre, toutes plus ou moins rigolotes. Vers onze heures toutes les pièces étaient jouées. Tous les petits ont dû aller se cou-

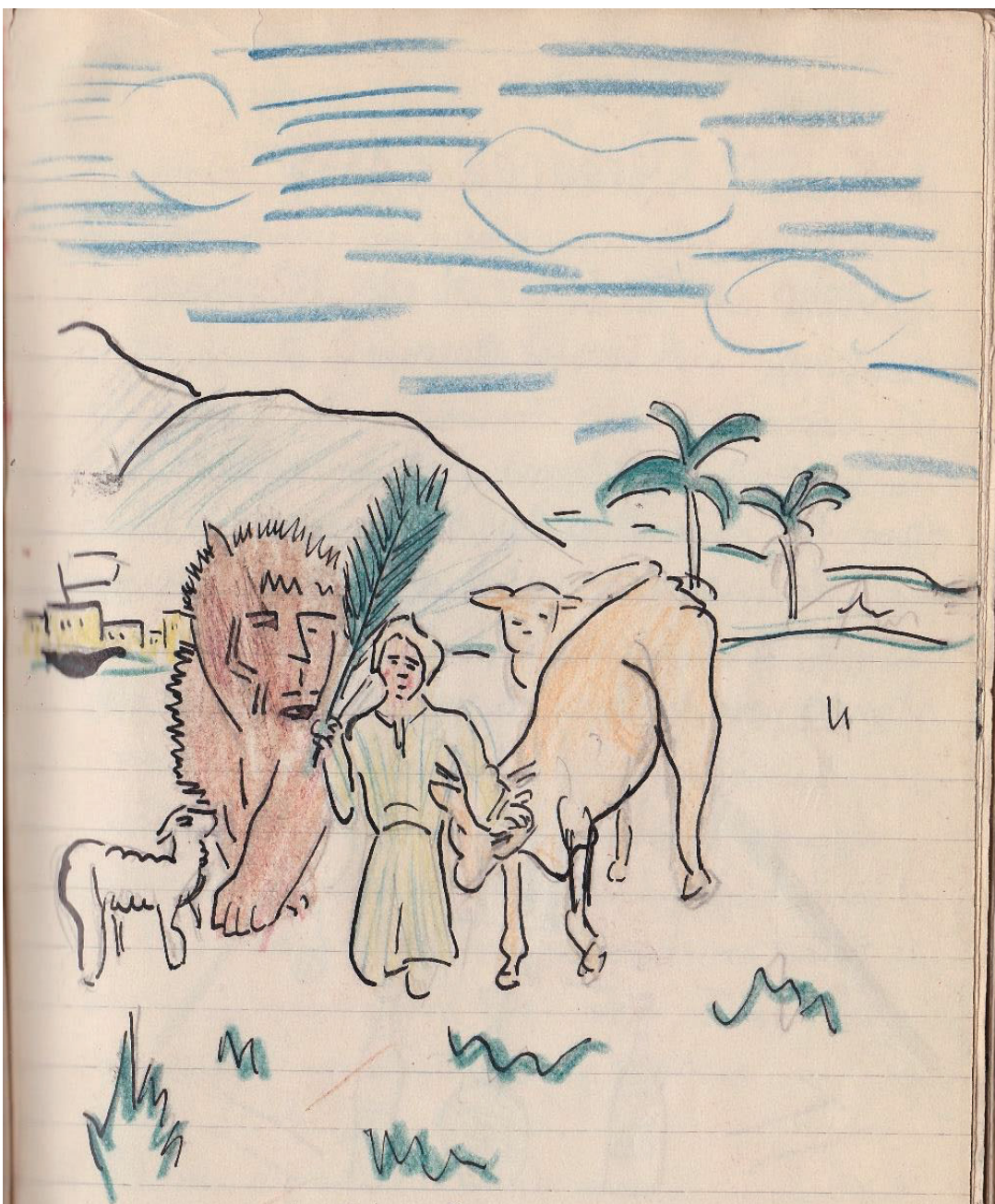












LA PAIX DU MONDE

8 Mai 1945



hautement gagnée au Chambon

Mangousts barre la route  
au "Mauvais esprit"

A bientôt  
Chambon le 4-11-45  
H. Hilsken  
C. L. Morvan

Bon souvenir de son C P  
à la patrouille des mangoustes  
qu'il espère un jour revoir en  
Erez. Bon souhait pour la  
marche de la pat.

Schneemann  
Charles Landau.

Maikeus souvenirs  
de ma cop  
en cette patrouille  
Jean

## *CHAPTER XIV*

### *AMERICA*

#### *A. N.Y.P.D. BLUE*

The S.S. Sobieski docked on the west side of Manhattan on Saturday morning, November 1, 1947. The voyage from Cannes, including the extra night at Ambrose Light, took twelve days. We went through customs and at about 12:00 pm we stepped out into America together.

Cousin Jeanne and her husband, Jack Shenkman, were waiting for us. They were married before the war. Jack served as a supply sergeant in the Army Air Corps during the war. Initially, he was stationed in England and he visited Aunt Rachel and my cousins when he was there. He was in the second or third wave of landings on D-Day and he continued his military service in France. Jack put our suitcase in his car. Jeanne remembered her French, and they took us out for lunch at a diner that was near the pier. With Jeanne as our translator, Jack told us that he had arranged a job for me and a job for Jacques. He said to me, “On Monday morning, you go to 100<sup>th</sup> Street between Amsterdam Avenue and Broadway. There’s a woodworking shop there and there’s a job waiting for you.” He also gave Jacques his instructions to report for his first job in America on Monday morning.

After lunch, Jeanne and Jack took us to where Jacques and I would be staying. Our cousins rented a room for us in an apartment on the fifth floor of a walk-up building on the corner of Daly Avenue and East Tremont Avenue in the West Farms section of the Bronx. The tenants had a spare bedroom and they rented it out to us. We met the tenants and they showed us to our room and gave us the keys to the building and to the apartment. They explained how the keys worked to



Jacques, and told him that they wouldn't be coming home until very late, and if no one is home when we got back, don't worry about it and make ourselves at home. Jacques and I left the apartment and we went to Cousin Betty's apartment for dinner. Betty was married to Joe Gold who served in the Navy during the war. They lived in a second-floor apartment two blocks away on Vyse Avenue and East Tremont Avenue. Mother's sister, Tante Gitla, was there and so were Cousin Irving and his wife Gertie. At dinner, I met Betty and Joe's young son, Peter. He was named after Grandfather Pierre.

Betty made us a nice dinner of lamb chops. Around 11:00 p.m. Jacques said that he was tired and wanted to go to sleep. We said goodnight and walked back to our apartment. We walked up the five flights of stairs and the hallway was dark. It took Jacques about twenty minutes until he figured out which key went where. I took a shower and then Jacques said that he was going to take a shower. I put on my shorts and started to unpack our suitcase. As I'm doing that I hear the doorbell ring. Jacques is still in the shower and I don't speak English, so I ignored the doorbell. A little while later, like fifteen minutes later, I heard a knock on one of the windows. I said to myself, "What? We're on the fifth floor." I went over to the window in my shorts and peeked through the drawn drapes and I saw a policeman on the fire escape with a gun in his hand. I'm thinking, "Oh how exciting. I'm in New York and there's going to be some action here. Maybe he's chasing some thief." I opened the drapes all the way and opened the sash window. The policeman jumped in through the open window, grabbed me, slammed me against a wall and puts his gun to my head. He starts talking to me. And then another cop came in through the window. He ripped his uniform as he came through it and he started yelling. I called out to Jacques, who was still in the bathroom taking his shower, "Hey, Jacques, les flics sont la" "Hey Jacques, the cops are in here." Jacques shouted back from the shower, "Laisse-les" "Leave them." He thought that I was joking. Four other cops opened the front door and came into the apartment. I had six New York policemen pointing their guns at me and I got scared. I had only been in New York twelve hours. The cops banged on the bathroom door but Jacques didn't open it. They pushed the door in and they yanked him out of the shower. They demanded to know what we were doing in the apartment. Jacques told them that we were just renting a room, that we had just arrived from France that day and we were living there. The police told us that one of the neighbors called and told them that the apartment

was being robbed. Jacques showed them our passports. The cops shook their heads and they all cleared out of the apartment. That was my first night in America.

My second day in America was Sunday, November 2, 1947. I wanted to get in contact with my two buddies, John and Paul Levie. Cousin Betty had a phone book and she helped me. We started looking up the name Levie, and there were a lot of them. I picked one and Betty placed the call. As luck would have it, the first person who we called was a cousin of John and Paul. The lady gave us their phone number. The brothers left the Moulin several months before I did and they didn't know that I was coming to America. I called and got them. They were living in an apartment in Washington Heights in Manhattan. We made a date to meet the following Saturday night at Nedick's on the corner of 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 42<sup>nd</sup> Street in Times Square. The following Saturday night I took the subway to Times Square. I met my friends John and Paul and we had a big reunion party at Nedick's and dined on hot dogs and orange drinks. After our meal we started going to the movies. We went from one movie to the next, until about one or two o'clock in the morning when we got tired and went home.

## **B.     *GREETINGS***

I went to work on Monday morning, November 3, 1947 at 8:00 a.m. I stayed for about a week and then found another job that I liked better. On Monday evening after our first day at work in America, Jacques and I went to a school on the southeast corner of Vyse Avenue and East Tremont Avenue, across the street from the apartment building where Cousins Betty and Joe Gold lived. The school is now known as P.S. 6. We enrolled in a class to learn English with other immigrants. We went several times a week after work. I supplemented the English lessons by reading newspapers. I bought a French-English dictionary and looked up any words I couldn't understand and I tried hard to comprehend the newspaper articles. I felt that the class was too slow for me. I found another English class in a high school near the Grand Concourse. I signed up for an English class and a French class. I found out that I learned more English in the French class because I could see right away the equivalent words. It helped me speed up my ability to speak and understand English. In about three months I felt comfortable with the language. I continued

to read a lot of newspapers and I went to the movies, and that also helped me to learn English.

After Jacques and I had been in America for about one month, Tante Gitla rented an apartment and we moved in with her. The apartment was at 795 Garden Street near the corner of Southern Boulevard and across the street from the Bronx Zoo.

Jack Shenkman asked Jacques and me if we wanted to apply for U.S. citizenship. Jacques and I discussed it and we said, "Okay," and we applied to become citizens. The Korean War started in June of 1950. Unknown to me at the time, once I applied to become a U.S. citizen I became eligible for the draft although I was not a citizen yet. In the beginning of March of 1951 I saw the postman at our apartment building on Garden Street. I asked him, "Is there any mail?" He said, "What's your name?" I told him my name was Jean Szklarz. He said that my name was not on the mail box, which was labeled "Kopan." I told him that was my aunt and I was living with her. He then said, "Wait a minute." He looked through his mail bag and said, "You know, I got something for you. This is coming here constantly and I keep taking it back." He hands me an envelope and says, "That's for you." I took the letter with me into my apartment and opened it up. It said "Greetings..." and informed me that I was drafted and that I had to report to Whitehall Street in Manhattan. I went down there and they said to me, "Where were you? We sent you a lot of letters." I told them that I never got the letters. They said, "Well, you know, you're late. You're supposed to be in the Army already. We'll give you three weeks, and then you have to report."

At the time that I received my draft notice I was working as a foreman in a shop named "Ronayne" that made copies of antique furniture. It was a good job and I enjoyed working there. The owner of the shop was John Ronayne and he had a hard time finding qualified people who could do that work. He told me that if I wanted to stay as the foreman of the shop, he could get me a deferment. I told him, "No. If I have to go anyway, I may as well get it over with so I'll do my service now." On March 30, 1951 I was inducted into the United States Army. I was assigned to the 112<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment of the 28<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division and sent to Camp Atterbury, Indiana, for basic training. The first Sunday that I was in basic training I slept in late in my bunk. Someone came into the barracks and I heard footsteps coming close to me. Suddenly, my bunk was flipped upside down and I wound up on the floor with the bed. I looked up and I saw my friend John Levie. He was drafted a few weeks

before me. He was assigned to a medical company and I was assigned to the infantry. We hid together in France during World War II and here in America we wound up in the same Army outfit. Because we were in different units we could not see that much of each other, but we stayed in touch and made sure to get together whenever we could.

### C. *IRONY*

We were training to go to fight in Korea. I went to Ft. Bragg, North Carolina for my last training exercise before being sent to Korea. It was called Exercise Southern Pine. The tank company and the band were sent in advance to Korea. During basic training one of the tank commanders tried to talk me into transferring to his tank company. He told me, "Come on, you're short, you'll fit in a tank." I knew a guy in the Bronx named Eddie. Eddie had been severely injured in a tank in North Africa during World War II. I declined the tank commander's suggestion.

I had applied to become a United States citizen. My induction was delayed because the draft notice was not initially delivered to me. The 28<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division's orders to go to Korea were cancelled. In what might be the ultimate irony in my life, I was sent instead to the American Zone of Occupation in Germany. For one year, three months and twenty-five days I participated in the Allied military occupation of the country that was responsible for murdering my family in France. I sailed on a troop ship back across the Atlantic Ocean from New York to the port of Bremerhaven, Germany. I was assigned to a post at the Wharton Barracks in Heilbronn, which is twenty-four miles north of Stuttgart. Heilbronn is also one hundred sixty-two miles due east of Metz. The Wharton Barracks were built in the 1930s for the Wehrmacht [the German Army], when they were named the Schlieffen Kaserne and the Priesterwald Kaserne. "Kaserne" is German for "Barracks." After World War II they were used to house displaced persons until the U.S. Army took over the facilities in 1952. I slept in a room where German soldiers used to sleep.

For convenience, I sailed to Germany with the 110<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment instead of with my own 112<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment so I could spend some time at home and then leave on a ship that was sailing from New York. For my first few weeks in Germany I stayed with that Regiment at a Kaserne on the outskirts of Munich. I spent most of my



time guarding a munitions dump at night. I unchambered the round from my rifle because I was afraid that I might accidentally shoot at something during the dark night that only my imagination saw and then accidentally blow the place up. The Captain of the Company that I was with found out that I was French and he asked me if I was interested in transferring to his Company. The Captain knew another Captain who used a Frenchman, like me, as his orderly. The Captain said to me, "The other Captain has a French orderly. Would you like to be my orderly?" I said no and told him that I wanted to rejoin my outfit with all my friends. He asked me "Why?" I told him, "You know, quite frankly, I was drafted. I want to put two years in, and I really don't want to shine shoes and press clothes and do housekeeping. If I have to be a soldier, then I want to be a soldier, I just don't want to do that." The Captain got mad at me, but he said "You can rejoin your outfit." I rejoined the 112<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment in Heilbronn as soon as possible. I was on maneuvers in the Black Forest on the French-German border when I received orders to report to radio school. I packed my duffle bag and went to school to learn Morse Code. The U.S. Army thought it would be a good idea to train a Frenchman how to be a radio operator. They were right; I graduated fifth in a class of seventy-five. I was assigned to the First Battalion, Headquarters Company. The Army put my language skills to good use. My German was good enough to qualify me as the designated negotiator to purchase beer from a brewery for a party that the officers threw for all of the troops after the completion of a field exercise. My French was also put to good use. Some of my buddies went to Paris when they had leave time and they all were falling in love with girls in Paris. When they returned to the Wharton Barracks they asked me to write letters in French to their girlfriends in Paris.

After a few months in Heilbronn, I said to one of my new Army buddies, Salo Morgan, "Let's go to Metz for the weekend," and so we did. We took a room in a hotel near the railroad station. I walked around Metz with Salo. Our apartment at No. 7 en Vincentrue was still standing. I had been promoted to acting Corporal. Whenever French soldiers saw me on the street, they saluted me. It felt funny. I tracked down David Knecht's oldest son, who ran a clothing store in Metz. David Knecht came to my hotel and he invited Salo and me for Shabbat dinner. Monsieur Knecht and his wife had moved to a nice villa and we had a home cooked dinner at the Knecht's table, which was once again illuminated by my grandparents' Shabbat candle sticks. Monsieur

Knecht had connections with the U.S. Army and he told me that if I wanted to get transferred to Metz, he would arrange it. I politely declined his offer. We returned to Heilbronn on Sunday afternoon. Monsieur Knecht met us at the railroad station. He handed me a bag with sandwiches and a bottle of wine for our trip back to base. For the last time, my Father's best friend said goodbye to me and he gave me a kiss.

Jacques kept in touch with Cousin Joseph Rychner in Paris. Joseph told Jacques that Cousin Lydia Rychner had been sent to a concentration camp and survived. Lydia's parents, David and Genia, and her sisters Ella and Cilly, perished in the concentration camps. Lydia married Jack Reich after the war and they were put in a displaced persons ["DP"] camp. They moved to Israel, but returned to Germany and they were put back in a DP camp. The DP camp was called Foehrenwald and it was located southwest of Munich in Wolfratshausen in the American zone of occupation. Jacques suggested that I should go and visit Lydia. I asked my Sergeant for a weekend pass and told him where I was going. He looked at a map and said, "You can't go. I can't give you a pass to go there." I said "Why?" and he answered, "Because it's red zoned." I asked him "What does that mean?" and he told me "Red zoned means that there are problems and it's off limits to U.S. Army personnel. A lot of GIs are getting into trouble with the black market in that area." I said, "Could I speak to the Lieutenant?" I explained to the Lieutenant that I had a cousin living in a DP camp who I had never met, that she had survived the concentration camps and that I wanted to go over there and bring her something and meet her. The Lieutenant said, "I can't help you." I then saw the Captain and he also told me that I could not go. I asked the Captain for permission to see the Battalion Commander and he gave me permission to talk to him. I saw a Major at Battalion Headquarters and told him my story. The Major had the same response for me, "You can't go." Then I got a little angry. I said, "Sir, I want you to know that I am not a U.S. citizen. My home town is Metz, which is about one hour from here. I have no address in the U.S. I have a brother there, but he's married. I am by myself. I could give you back my uniform and just leave and go back to Metz. You can't do anything to me, I'm not a citizen. I made a pledge of allegiance and I am willing to serve, but you're stopping me from visiting a cousin who survived a tragedy. I'm not going to the DP camp to do black market, I'm just going to see my cousin. She has a husband and I want to meet them. My whole family got destroyed, and this is one person who survived." The Major

told me to wait and he left the room. When he returned he told me, "You can go, but don't get yourself in trouble. I'll give you special permission." I said, "Thank you, sir." I went shopping and put together a package of coffee and other goodies. I took the train to Munich and then to Wolfratshausen. I entered the DP camp in my uniform and the people there stared at me because the camp was off limits to GIs. I found the building where Jacques told me Lydia lived and I asked a woman there, "Lydia Reich?" She said "Upstairs." I walked upstairs and I met my cousin Lydia. I said, "Lydia, I'm your cousin, Jean Szklarz." I spent the day with Lydia and Jack. She made me dinner and then I returned to Heilbronn. Eventually, Lydia and Jack were able to immigrate to America. They moved to the Chicago area and I visited them whenever I went on a business trip to Chicago. Lydia published her testimony and it is titled, "Desperation -- Surviving Hitler's Intention (iUniverse, Inc. 2009)."

I also used one of my furloughs to return to London to visit Paulette, Aunt Rachel and my cousins. I took a train to the Hook of Holland, which is a port town near Rotterdam and The Hague, and then I took a ferry across the North Sea to Harwich, England. From Harwich I took a train to London and made my way back to Canons Park. Paulette was now fourteen years old. I took her shopping in a PX and bought her nylons and a camera. We went with cousin Martin to see a Jerry Lewis and Dean Martin movie in Piccadilly Circus called "Jumping Jacks."

On the train back to Heilbronn from the Hook of Holland I was seated in a compartment with an officer in the Spanish Army and with a soldier in the French Army. The French soldier kept looking at me and I started talking to him in French. He suddenly told me, "I know you. You're Jean Szklarz, aren't you?" I said, "Yeah. How do you know me?" He said, "Don't you remember me?" and I said "No." It turned out that he was one of the Jewish boys from Beaulieu-sur-Dordogne. He had been hidden with his parents near the town and he used to spend the day with the other boys and me. We exchanged addresses and I invited him for a weekend at the Wharton Barracks. My Company Commander gave his permission and we spent a nice weekend together. I also saw John Levie while I was in Germany. He wound up driving a kitchen truck and if I was walking and he spotted me he honked his horn and waved at me as he drove by. Even though John's Kaserne was not that close to the Wharton Barracks, we managed to get together for dinner several times while we were in Germany.

About two months before I was scheduled to be discharged from active duty a Major from the Seventh Army Headquarters in Stuttgart came to pick me up in a jeep and he took me to Stuttgart. (During World War II the Seventh Army invaded the south of France and I watched soldiers from the Seventh Army march past the Centre Bayard in Toulouse.) When I got to Headquarters they tested my ability to translate the French and English languages. When the test was completed I was told that a General needed a French translator and that the job was mine. The job came with two promotions, a jeep and my own apartment in Stuttgart. I said that I was scheduled to be sent home in two months and I didn't want the job. They told me, "That's not a problem. You can re-enlist."

Stuttgart is one hundred twenty miles northwest of the town of Dachau. The Dachau concentration camp was liberated by American troops on April 29, 1945. The International Monument at the Dachau Memorial Site was formally dedicated in September 1968. Part of the Monument is a short wall. In front of the wall is a box that contains the ashes of victims of the concentration camp. On the wall itself there are letters which say in five languages:

### **"NEVER AGAIN"**

I took my Army of Occupation Medal for my service in Germany and I returned to the United States where I was separated from active duty on March 17, 1953 at Camp Kilmer, New Jersey.

### ***D. TILLIE***

The Holocaust took away everything that I had except for Jacques and Paulette. In an unlikely paradox, the Holocaust gave me something back, and it was something that made me happy for the rest of my life.

Tante Gitla died while I was in Germany and Jacques had married his wife Muriel before I left for Germany. Jacques found a room for me in an apartment in the Bronx, but after about a week I found my own apartment at 229 East 12<sup>th</sup> Street in Manhattan. I went to the Ronayne furniture shop to get my job back but the shop was closed. John Ronayne had died while I was on the ship back to America. I was entitled to apply for unemployment insurance as a returning soldier who had just been separated from service. I went up to the unemployment office and signed



up. A clerk interviewed me and asked, "What do you do?" I said, "Well, I just came out of the Army." She asked, "What's your MOS [military occupational specialty code]?" I said I was a radio operator. She told me to wait and when she returned she said, "You know, I have a job for you." I said, "What do you mean, you have a job for me?" She said, "We need a radio operator on a cargo tramp ship that goes around the world, and you have the qualifications. Your MOS qualifies you for that job on the ship." I said, "I don't want to go on a ship. Forget it, I'm not going to collect any unemployment."

I picked up a newspaper to search the job listings. I applied for the first job that I saw and I went to work for the Excellent Furniture Company in Brooklyn who made office furniture. It wasn't exactly what I wanted, but it paid the rent and put food on my table.

I was called down for an interview at a naturalization office in Manhattan where Lincoln Center is today. The woman who interviewed me asked if I had been out of the country for an extended period of time in the past five years and I told her that I was out of the country for one year and three months. She was startled and said, "You're not supposed to be out of the country during the five-year waiting period." I told her that I didn't want to leave, but the Army sent me to Germany. She said, "Oh, that's okay. That's permitted. You can go, I don't have any more questions." On January 11, 1954 I became a citizen of the United States of America. By decree of the United States District Court on the same day my name was changed from Jean Szklarz to Jean Sklar.

There was an older gentleman named Itzik Eichenbaum who worked at Excellent Furniture Company on a bench next to my workbench. He was a survivor of World War II from Poland and his relatives in America helped him to immigrate. Itzik only spoke Yiddish and we were able to talk to each other. Itzik kept telling me, "You know, Jean, I have a nice girl for you. Would you like to meet her, go out on a date with her?" I said, "No. I don't need you to furnish me with a date. If I want to go out, I can go out." But Itzik kept after me and I finally relented and told him, "Okay. Give me the number and I will call her up." Tillie Rabinowitz worked for a book publishing company. She lived in Queens with her parents, Sam and Ruth. Her parents had immigrated from Poland to America at the same time that my parents immigrated from Poland to France. Tillie was born in New York. Ruth's sister Frances married Sidney Wajsbort and Itzik was Sidney's brother-in-law. I made a date to take Tillie out for dinner and a movie on 42<sup>nd</sup> Street. I

rang the doorbell to her apartment. She opened the door and she stood there for a moment looking at me and she said, “Just a minute, I’ll be right back.” She closed the door and in a few minutes she came back and opened the door. I said, “What’s going on?” She said, “My shoes were too high, I was taller than you. I had to change my shoes to be the same height as you.” I thought it was funny.

We kept dating and Tillie told me that her mother asked her, “What’s his name?” She said that she told her mother, “I don’t know, I didn’t understand him.” I still had a heavy French accent and Tillie was making fun of the fact that she sometimes had trouble understanding my pronunciation. We went together for about a year, and she was a lovely girl, and we decided to get engaged. I had saved just enough money to buy an engagement ring. Like most everybody in New York, my cousin had a cousin who was in the jewelry business, and I bought Tillie an engagement ring.

Tillie and I were married on December 5, 1954 at the President Chateau catering hall in Brooklyn. We had a lovely wedding. Paul Levie was my best man. Tillie’s cousin Sylvia Kramer was her Maid of Honor. I didn’t know how to drive, so we took a bus to a hotel in the Catskills where we spent our honeymoon. We began our life together in a one room apartment on 149<sup>th</sup> Street in Jamaica, Queens. In April of 1955 Paulette and Cousin Sally came to America on the Queen Mary to visit us. In 1956 our first son, Theodore [Traitel], who we called Teddy, was born. Teddy was followed by Howard in 1959 and Carol Ann [Cecile Annette] in 1965. They have given us seven grandchildren, Rebecca and William Nathan [Teddy and Madelyn]; Amanda, Samantha and Marc [Howard and Lori]; and Sarah and Calista [Carol and Paul].

Tillie is the one who rekindled my hopes after World War II. I had a fear of trying to do or accomplish anything, and I was afraid that somebody was going to come along and just take it away from me, like it happened in France. Everyone had been taken away, robbed, and imprisoned and killed, so it was hard to get rid of that feeling. Tillie took that feeling away from me, and I was able to put it someplace else. She gave me a new outlook in life. We had a wonderful and loving life together.



Jacques and Jean Szklarz  
S.S. Sobieski  
En route to New York  
October 1947





Jean Szklarz  
American Zone of Occupation  
Heilbronn, Germany  
Wharton Barracks  
1952/53





Jean and Tillie Sklar  
Brooklyn, New York  
December 5, 1954



Metz, France  
Jewish Cemetery  
Rue des Deux Cimetières  
Memorial to the Deported



Dachau, Germany  
International Monument  
Ashes of the Martyrs





Pierre Rycher's grave  
Metz, France  
Jewish Cemetery  
Rue des Deux Cimetières



Paul Levie   Jean Szklarz   John Levie  
Toulouse, France 1944



Paul Levie   Jean Sklar   John Levie  
New York, USA 1994





Paulette, Jean and Jacques  
USA, 1996



Jean and Tillie Sklar  
50<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary  
December 5, 2004

## *EPILOGUE*

Our group of ten travelers awakened early on the morning of October 27, 2016 in our hotel on the Rue Saint-Laurent in Paris. We walked the short distance up the Boulevard de Strasbourg to the Gare de L'Est. We had reservations on a TGV [Train à Grand Vitesse] that departed at 8:40 a.m. The high-speed train whisked us to Metz in ninety-minutes at speeds up to 200 m.p.h. When we arrived at the Gare de Metz I spoke with three taxi drivers in my Lorraine accent and I arranged for transportation to our destination. The taxis drove up the Boulevard André Maginot along La Seille River and past the Porte des Allemandes. We turned up the Boulevard Paixhans and drove past Jacques' school on the right and past the site on the left where Uncle Aron and Aunt Chaya had lived on the corner of Rue de L'Arsenal. That section of the street was renamed in memory of Rabbi Elie Bloch. We crossed the Moselle over the Pont des Grilles, then turned right on the Avenue de Blinda which ran parallel to the river. We bore right on the Rue des Deux Cimetières which also paralleled the Moselle. We reached our destination and I led Teddy, Madelyn, Rebecca, William, Carol, Howard, Amanda and Paulette's two daughters, Caron and Debra, to Pierre Rychner's grave in the Jewish Cemetery of Metz.

Years previously, Jacques had a marble stone added to Grandfather's headstone with the names of Traitel, Cecile Lea, Nathan and Annette carved into it. On that cold October morning, just yards from the Moselle where I had spent the first ten years of my life, three generations of the Szklarz/Rychner family said the Mourner's Kaddish at Grandfather Pierre's grave. Although the Mourner's Kaddish is recited in memory of the dead, its text makes no mention of death. Instead, the prayer talks about life and peace: "May there be abundant peace from heaven, and life, for us and for all Israel..." Grandfather Pierre would have appreciated the moment. I learned from my trip to the archives of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in 2017 that

Grandmother Celine was not deported to Auschwitz after she was arrested. A French doctor certified that she was blind and unable to walk alone. Grandmother was hospitalized in Poitiers and she died at l'Hotel Dieu de Poitiers on February 20, 1944.<sup>29</sup>

Edmond Fleg was right. There will be Jews left. The gathering of generations at Grandfather Pierre's grave is a testament to the failure of the forces that sought to exterminate the Jewish people during World War II. I sometimes wonder why I survived while other members of my family perished. Luck? Quick thinking at the most opportune times? An unwavering will to survive? The help of people both known and unknown whose courage and humanity dwarfed the cowardice and savagery of the enemies of humankind? I travelled to Normandy in 2012 and visited some of the invasion beaches, including Omaha, Utah and Gold. The bravery of the soldiers who stormed those beaches cannot be expressed in words. I also went to the American military cemeteries at Colleville-sur-Mer and Saint James to pay my respects to the soldiers who died to liberate me. Whether there are one or more reasons for my survival, it was my destiny to travel down the path of life.

Three thousand years ago a great calamity ravaged the land and people of Ancient Israel. The prophet Joel wrote about it in apocalyptic terms. He implored the elders of Israel to "Tell your children about it, and your children to their children, and their children to another generation." [Joel, Chapter 1:3]. "L'dor va'dor" is Hebrew for "passing from generation to generation." It is a tradition that has defined and preserved the Jewish people through the millennia. I have written my testimony in the spirit of "l'dor va'dor" for my children, for their children and for all people who choose to read it. Unlike Joel, I have no prophecies to offer. Only the light.



## *DEDICATION*

To my wife Tillie, who gave me a new life. She always wanted me to tell my story.

To my brother Jacques. Because he saved my life I am able to tell my story.

To my father, mother, sisters Paulette and Annette and brother Nathan, and to all of the rest of my family and all my friends from France, because this is their story too.

To my children and their spouses and to my grandchildren. It is also for them to know my story.

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> France Pub, “The First World War in France,” [www.france-pub.com/world-war-1.php](http://www.france-pub.com/world-war-1.php)

<sup>2</sup> France Pub, “The First World War in France,” [www.france-pub.com/world-war-1.php](http://www.france-pub.com/world-war-1.php)

<sup>3</sup> United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Selected Records From The Departmental Archives Of The Vienne, 1940-1961, RG-43.119M (hereinafter, “USHMM”), FRAD86\_109W14\_0002.jpg (cover); 0003-0004 (Rychner); 0013-0014 (Szklarz); 0029-0030 (Ellert).

<sup>4</sup> USHMM, FRAD86\_109W14\_0013-0014.jpg.

<sup>5</sup> USHMM, FRAD86\_109W3\_0266.jpg (cover); 0283-0284 (Rychner); 0297-0298 (Szklarz); 0301-0302 (Ellert).

<sup>6</sup> USHMM, FRAD86\_109W3\_0004.jpg (cover; “Lists of Jews in the Department, Census of 1942); 0017-0018 (Rychner); 0025-0028 (Szklarz); FRAD86\_109W3\_0082.jpg (cover; “Jews Poitiers”); 0139-0142 (Szklarz); 0143-0144 (Ellert).

<sup>7</sup> USHMM, FRAD86\_109W5\_2280-2281.jpg (Prefecture of the Vienne, Jewish Affairs, Registration Card).

<sup>8</sup> USHMM, FRAD86\_109W17\_0121-0122.jpg; 0125; 0183; 0187-0189; 0204-0208 (arrest orders and lists of names).

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<sup>9</sup> USHMM, FRAD86\_109W17\_0204-0205.jpg (arrest order).

<sup>10</sup> USHMM FRAD86\_109W351\_0567.jpg.

<sup>11</sup> Archives du Mémorial de la Shoah, Documents: MK490(43)-596 and 614 (U.G.I.F. report on Centre No. 28).

<sup>12</sup> Archives du Mémorial de la Shoah, Document: MK490(43)-614 (U.G.I.F. report on Centre No. 28).

<sup>13</sup> ORT America, [www.ortamerica.org/aboutus/our-history/](http://www.ortamerica.org/aboutus/our-history/).

<sup>14</sup> The registration book is published at [www.ecoledetravail.fr](http://www.ecoledetravail.fr) at the “Divers” pull down tab. The digital index to the registration book misspells “Szklarz” as “Salzlarg” but the scan of the original page is correct.

<sup>15</sup> See, note 12, supra.

<sup>16</sup> [www.ecoledetravail.fr](http://www.ecoledetravail.fr) at the “Divers” pull down tab.

<sup>17</sup> Yad Vashem, “French Jewish Scouts, [www.yadvashem.org/odot\\_pdf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%205865.pdf](http://www.yadvashem.org/odot_pdf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%205865.pdf); Mémorial de la Shoah, “The Jewish Resistance,” [www.juifs-en-resistance.memorialdelashoah.org/la-resistance-juive/les-mouvements/les-eclaireurs-isra%C3%A9lites-de-france.htm](http://www.juifs-en-resistance.memorialdelashoah.org/la-resistance-juive/les-mouvements/les-eclaireurs-isra%C3%A9lites-de-france.htm).

<sup>18</sup> Yad Vashem, “About the Program,” [www.yadvashem.org/righteous/about-the-program](http://www.yadvashem.org/righteous/about-the-program).

<sup>19</sup> Jewish Telegraph Agency, August 28, 1940, “Son of Edmond Fleg Killed in Action,” [www.jta.org/1940/08/28/archive/son-of-edmond-fleg-killed-in-action](http://www.jta.org/1940/08/28/archive/son-of-edmond-fleg-killed-in-action).

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<sup>20</sup> Figaro, April 6, 1940 (#97),  
[gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k410553/texteBrut](http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k410553/texteBrut).

<sup>21</sup> American Joint Distribution Committee, "History of JDC,"  
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<sup>22</sup> Zakhor Online, "The House of Moissac," [www.zakhor-online.com/?p=2323](http://www.zakhor-online.com/?p=2323); "Moissac, ville de Justes oubliée,"  
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<sup>23</sup> [archives.jdc.org/multimedia/Documents/NY\\_AR\\_45-54/NY\\_AR45-54\\_Subj/NY\\_AR45-54\\_00132/NY\\_AR45-54\\_00132\\_00171.pdf](http://archives.jdc.org/multimedia/Documents/NY_AR_45-54/NY_AR45-54_Subj/NY_AR45-54_00132/NY_AR45-54_00132_00171.pdf).

<sup>24</sup> Archives du Mémorial de la Shoah, Document: MK490(43)-629-A  
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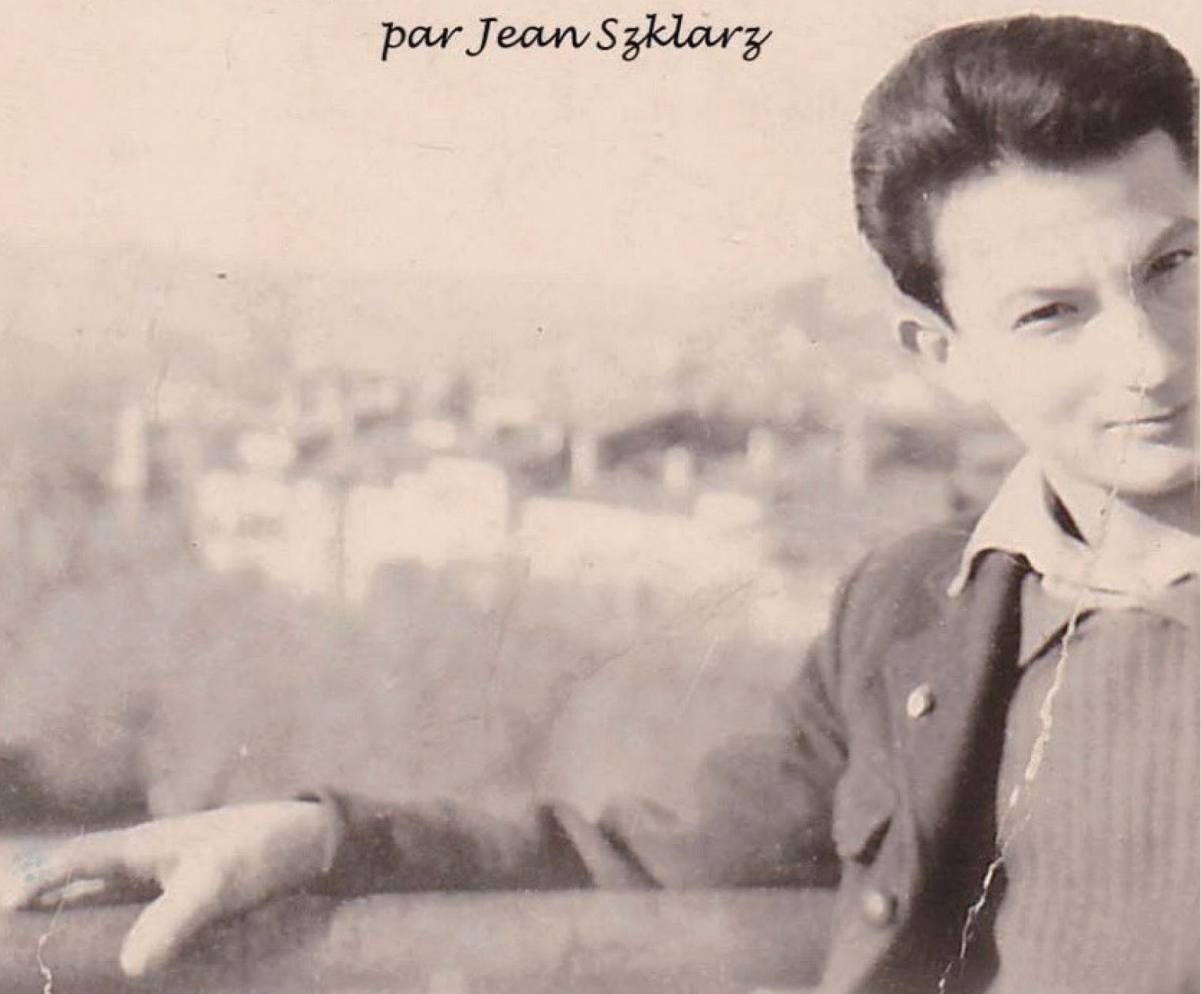
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# *Disparu*

*Mon Témoignage*

*par Jean Szklarz*



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